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Radio Listening Preferences among Higher-Education Students in Jammu and Kashmir: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This paper uses the methods of systematic quantitative analysis to examine the radio listening behaviour of the university and college students in the Jammu and Kashmir region, which is an area with unique geographic, linguistic and cultural contexts. In a comparative analysis, the study systematically investigates radio listening frequencies and station preferences among university and college students in Jammu and Kashmir, examining whether significant regional differences exist between the two capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar. The research question the study seeks to address is whether there are systematic regional variations in the process students in Jammu and Srinagar engage in radio listening and the process in which they move among the broadcasting opportunities available to them such as the public service broadcasting and commercial stations. This study provides empirical evidence that geographic context significantly shapes radio consumption patterns among university students in Jammu and Kashmir. The systematic analysis in this paper has tried to shed light on how conventional broadcasting media is still pertinent to university students in the geographically and culturally diverse parts of India; as well as in how the factors can be found to shape the direction of the growing generation radio listeners.

Introduction

Radio in India and beyond has always been a crucial platform that has influenced lives, witnessed the changing histories and came across multiple technological transitions since its inception. Radio

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helps in intellectual growth of the youth and integrating them in the school curriculum can have a significance in society and the community that they live in (Mohammed-Kabir et al., 2024).

The broadcasting service in India was started in 1924 through the patronage of Mr. H.E. Viscount Goschen, Governor of Madras at the time, at the Madras Presidency Radio Club. As the activities of the Club stopped in October 1927, the transmitter fell into the possession of the Corporation of Madras, which adopted a regular broadcasting service on April 1, 1930.

The first private FM in India was launched on July 3, 2001, in Bangalore, named Radio City 91.1 FM by Music Broadcast Private Limited (MBPL). Later, Times Group started its radio operation in October of the same year from Indore, an Indian city in Madhya Pradesh, with Radio Mirchi launched by Entertainment Network India Limited (ENIL). Red FM was launched in 2002 as Suryan FM by Sun Group and was later rebranded to Red FM in 2009 in 64 Indian cities. Later, Reliance Broadcast Network Limited (RBNL) launched 92.7 BIG FM in 2006 across various Indian cities, including Jammu and Srinagar.

All India Radio opened its station in Jammu on December 1, 1947, under the name Radio Kashmir Jammu. Radio in Kashmir started its function since July 1, 1948 as Radio Kashmir, Srinagar. Four private and three public FM networks (managed by All India Radio) are functional in both Jammu and Srinagar, with hundreds of thousands of daily audience.

In 2006, for the first time, Reliance Broadcast Network Limited (RBNL) launched 92.7 BIG FM across various Indian cities, including Jammu and Srinagar, opening two of its stations, Big FM, with the frequency 92.7 MHz each in Jammu and Srinagar. In 2018, three more stations were launched in Jammu and Kashmir - Red FM, Radio Mirchi, and FM Tadka.

The radio broadcasting landscape in Jammu and Kashmir provides a specific context for audience research. The region is home to a variety of geographical terrains, linguistic communities, and socio-cultural factors, which come together to shape media consumption among youth audiences. Colleges and universities in the Jammu and Srinagar area are examples of important institutional settings where students develop media consumption habits and preferences. Developing an understanding of the radio listening frequencies among the students yield possible insights into contemporary radio station preferences among youth in the region.

Review of Literature

Due to the changes in society, the demographic shift, and technological advancement, the pattern of radio listening has significantly evolved over time. There are many aspects of radio listening behavior, which are discussed in this synthesis including demographic preference, driving forces, and implications of digital technology. According to Krause (2020), being an activity that enhances well-being, radio listening is often used in the daily life of older adults who listen to radio content in a diverse range of ways, including passive, and active listening, and use it to manage mood, relaxation, and also create a sense of community. But the focus on the traditional radio among the millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha is declining due to the digital media. However, Rodero (2020) considers that radio is perceived as a credible and reassuring source of information at an emergency situation, like the COVID-19 lockdown, and is appreciated by listeners that it helps to distract and reduce loneliness. One of the ways to keep them engaged is to develop digital content based on the preferences of new generations and enhance the process of interaction through online platforms (Robert-Agell et al., 2022).

A research undertaken on the young adult listeners across Europe provided insight into the young radio listeners specifically and indicated complex listening habits. When discussing the quantitative research methodology of audience, Gutièrrez (2016) noted that young listeners multitask during the only short periods of time of listening to the radio that is between 15 minutes to 1 hour, which is questionable concerning the assumptions of radio listening as an attentive consumption. This practice has some far-reaching consequences to the comprehension of the role radio consumption plays in the activities of student audiences. These findings underscore the need to explore how institutional contexts, and regional factors, shape media preferential choice, especially when analyzing student groups in diverse geographical and institutional contexts, specifically examining the region of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a study that explored the trends and inclinations of media consumption among postgraduate students in two leading Indian universities, Chauhan and Verma (2024) found that there were significant variations in media consumption in multiple settings. It was established that the students of Central University of Haryana were more inclined to digital media, and the students of Maharishi

Dayanand University had more balanced tendencies connected with the selection of media of both digital and traditional types. The authors came to two conclusions that the media consumption among university students is affected by institutional and contextual factors and that geographic location and type of institution are two significant variables used in the study of media consumption. These results highlight the necessity of examining how institutional contexts, and regional characteristics, influence media preferential choice, a point of particular relevance when looking at student populations in geographically and institutionally diverse regions such as Jammu and Kashmir.

The geographic location has come out to be a very important predictor of the pattern of media consumption in India. Studies that have looked at the consumption of media in rural and urban areas show significant disparities in access to digital infrastructure, rate of technology adoption, and media availability (Economic Times, 2024). According to Rural Barometer Report, the regional differences are seen in media consumption with the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and Odisha reporting various trends in media adoption. It is important to note that, even though cities with strong digital networks are much more exposed to streaming services and online offerings, areas with a low level of digital penetration still depend on traditional media such as terrestrial radio. Jammu and Kashmir has a geographic uniqueness with different topography, language differences, and disparities in infrastructure, presenting different circumstances in radio listening, which could vary significantly with metropolitan regions.

The media infrastructure and broadcasting situation in Jammu and Kashmir offers special conditions for audience research. The media landscape in Jammu and Kashmir reports about a varied media environment that includes various radio stations, television stations, and online platforms as well as the historical experience of limited internet connectivity that has sometimes restricted access to digital media (Press Council of India, 2022). The All India Radio facilities and the private FM stations make up the institutional media environment in the region and establishes a competitive broadcasting ecosystem. The media policy of the government in Jammu and Kashmir focuses on radio as a media of choice when it comes to information dissemination especially to rural regions, and FM radio is becoming a popular media among youth audiences (Jammu and Kashmir Government Administration Department, 2020). Radio

broadcasting is institutionalized, and the geographic and linguistic peculiarities of the region provide a unique context of studying the preferences of students in radio listening.

Finally, a research study on how social media influences the use of internet carried out in Jammu and Kashmir with 70% of the respondents revealing that they are active social media users which means that there is relatively high consumption of digital media by the youth between the age group of 18 to 35 (Malik, 2025). Nonetheless, the same study had raised issues regarding the overuse of the internet, a frequent phenomenon, which also impacts academic performance and mental health implying that traditional media such as the radio can be used as the alternative source of information and entertainment.

Although there is considerable literature discussing Indian media consumption trends, little research exists on radio listenership patterns among university students in Jammu and Kashmir and their preferences for the available stations in the region. There are still other studies in the academic circles that analyze Indian media consumption, primarily focusing on television consumption, digital media, or social media and pay insufficient regard to radio consumption, a media form which still remains available and relevant to its consumers. In addition, the Jammu and Kashmir context, with its own cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical context, must take serious realism and caution into considering any broad generalization concerning findings from an Indian metro market sample. This is necessary due to the region's geographic distinctiveness. This study simply fills this important research gap by providing systematic quantitative evidence on the radio listening preferences of the university and college students as a unique group of consumers in the Jammu and Kashmir region, while contributing empirical data to the theoretical discussion of media consumption and providing practical information to broadcasting organizations and policymakers as well.

Research Objectives

1. To understand the radio listening habits among students of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To examine the station preference distributions between students of Jammu and Kashmir regions.

Research Hypotheses

H_1 1: There is a statistically significant difference in radio listening habits between the students of Jammu and Kashmir regions.

H_1 2: There is a statically significant difference in station preferences between the students of Jammu and Kashmir regions.

Methodology

This research study used a quantitative, cross-sectional research design with questionnaire based data collection using structured questionnaire. The cross sectional design allows for the cross-sectional exploration of radio listening preferences, listening habits, and associations at a single point in time within the population of interest. The quantitative approach provides statistical data about the frequencies and preferences, and other variables has addressed the aims of the research through the lens of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Prior to the study pilot study was conducted among the students as a pre-test for clarity and reliability.

This study employed a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques to survey college and university-going youth in the two capital cities of Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar and Jammu. Purposive sampling was employed at the institutional level to ensure that the study focused on the specific demographic most relevant to the research objectives. A total of 400 students were selected through simple random sampling across universities and colleges in Jammu and Srinagar, ensuring geographic representation. Within each geographic location, respondents were selected by institutional type (50 students from each university and college) and gender to ensure demographic diversity and representativeness.

At the college level, student participants were drawn from institutions affiliated with the Srinagar and Jammu Cluster Universities. To ensure unbiased selection and equal representation across institutions within each cluster, two colleges from each city were chosen using the lottery method, a random selection technique that assigns each institution an equal probability of being selected and eliminates researcher bias in the sampling process. This approach enhances the credibility and representativeness of the sample by preventing preferential selection of particular colleges. At the university level, students were selected through simple random sampling from four major universities: University of Kashmir, SKUAST Kashmir, University of Jammu, and SKUAST Jammu. These universities were included because they fall within the jurisdictional boundaries of the district headquarters of the two capital cities and collectively represent the diverse range of academic disciplines, institutional cultures, and

student demographics present in the region. The students from other states studying in these institutions were not included in the sample to ensure cultural uniformity special to Jammu and Kashmir.

The application of simple random sampling at the student level ensures that every eligible student within the selected institutions has an equal and independent chance of participation, thereby enhancing the generalizability of findings to the broader population of university youth in Jammu and Kashmir. This mixed-method sampling design, combining purposive selection at the institutional level with random selection at the individual level, addresses both the targeted nature of the research focus and the need for statistical representativeness in quantitative analysis.

Following institutional ethical clearance, questionnaires were administered to students through in-person distribution at campus locations. Respondents received information sheets explaining research objectives, data usage, and confidentiality protections. Participation was voluntary based while the researchers ensured that data collection was non-intrusive and did not interfere with academic activities.

Results

The initial aspect of radio consumption capacity relates to the existence of radio transistor devices in households. The frequency distribution shows that out of 400 respondents, 187 (46.8%) stated that they had radio transistors at home, and 213 respondents (53.2%) said they did not, as shown in the Table 1. This near-even split provides evidence of transitional adoption of radio technology in the population studied. While there were slightly more households without radio transistors, this discrepancy likely reflects a gradual shift away from traditional radio reception devices to other options, such as online streaming applications and mobile technologies.

Table 1: Frequencies of respondents having radio transistors at home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	187	46.8	46.8
	No	213	53.2	53.2
	Total	400	100.0	100.0

The significance of this distribution rests in the implications of the digital hinge for radio consumption specifically. Almost half the respondents still use traditional radio technology, and the other half use modern digital technologies. This bifurcation reflects broader patterns of media pluralism, as a blend of legacy and newer communication systems exists. The presence of two distinct groups in radio content consumption, for example, suggests that those represented in the study do not simply consume media in one way, but rather have diverse understandings of radio as a technology.

Furthermore, a multiple-response question was asked about the preferences of radio stations among the available commercial and public radio stations in the region. Analysing the listening frequencies, out of 561 responses, 25.8% listen to the Mirchi, while Red FM is listened to by 20.3% of the participants. One of the earliest private FM stations in Jammu and Kashmir, Big FM has 17.5% of the listeners, and Tadka FM has a mere 5.7% of the people listening to it. All India Radio's primary and FM networks have 13.4% of the people listening to it. Among 561 responses 97 respondents, comprised of 17.3%, do not listen to any of the stations mentioned in the study as visualized in the Figure 1. Since the availability of community radio stations across different districts and towns of Jammu and Kashmir have not been recorded in this study, most of the respondents could be listening to these stations, on and off, or no station at all. The percentage frequencies of these radio stations are mentioned in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Table 2. Station Frequencies

		N	Per cent
Station[a]	Mirchi	145	25.8%
	Red FM	114	20.3%
	Big FM	98	17.5%
	Tadka FM	32	5.7%
	AIR	75	13.4%
	None of the above	97	17.3%
Total		**561**	**100.0%**

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Analyzing listening behavior across geographic regions is helpful in illuminating how demographic and contextual characteristics shape media consumption behaviors. This study presents data looking at the prevalence of radio listening by region in a cross-tabulation format along with inferential statistical testing to assess the significance of observed associations.

Listening Frequencies

The researchers did a cross tabulation analysis to find out the radio listening frequencies between the students of Jammu and Kashmir regions, the results are shown in Table 3. This is an analysis of statistically significant differences (chi-square tests of independence) in radio listening frequencies of students in the Jammu and Kashmir regions.

The sample of the study is 400 respondents equally stratified in two geographic regions, one is Jammu (n= 200), and the other is Kashmir (n= 200). This is a balanced design that improves the statistical power and allows an unbiased regional comparison. None of the respondents had any missing values and all submitted complete data which gave a fully valid contingency table which can be used to test with inferential statistics.

Table 3. Region *Listening Frequency Crosstabulation

			Never	Sometimes	Rarely	Often	Always	Total
Region	Jammu	Count	48	78	36	28	10	200
		% within Region	24.0%	39.0%	18.0%	14.0%	5.0%	100.0%
	Kashmir	Count	84	36	28	32	20	200
		% within Region	42.0%	18.0%	14.0%	16.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	Total	**Count**	**132**	**114**	**64**	**60**	**30**	**400**
		% within Region	33.0%	28.5%	16.0%	15.0%	7.5%	100.0%

The Jammu subsample demonstrates a distribution pattern emphasizing intermediate engagement levels. The '*sometimes*' listening group constitutes the most significant percentage of 39.0% (n = 78) which shows that the majority of Jammu students listen to radio with moderate frequencies. The category of '*never*' listening includes 24.0% (n = 48), which indicates that about a quarter of the

Jammu population of students do not engage with any radio content. The '*rarely'* listening category covers 18.0% (n = 36), where the *'often*' listening category covers 14.0% (n = 28). The least percentage, 5.0% (n = 10) is those who said they always listened to radio. Such distribution illustrates a comparatively gradual flow through the levels of engagement, which indicates that there is no strong polarization of listening behaviors.

Similarly, the frequency profile of Kashmir students shows a significantly different distribution with large proportions in both extreme categories, shown in Figure 2. It is worth noting that the proportion of 42.0% (n = 84) of the Kashmir respondents who never listened to radio is dramatic, 18-percentage points higher than Jammu. This extreme non-involvement is the modal category of Kashmir, which means that radio is a marginal medium for a large majority of this student population. On the other hand, the category of 'always' listening makes 10.0% (n = 20) in Kashmir, which is twice the amount of 5.0% in Jammu. The middle terms, sometimes (18.0 percent, n = 36), rarely (14.0 percent, n = 28), and often (16.0 percent, n = 32) show rather weak representation, which gives rise to the bimodal distribution with the focus on both extremes.

Furthermore, the primary parametric test that was used to assess the association in the contingency table was the Pearson chi-square test of independence, which provided significant evidence to discard the null hypothesis. The test p = 0.001 (reported as .000) 29.892 with $\chi^2(4)$, shown in the Table 4, gives highly overwhelming evidence that the observed differences in the distributional patterns of the regions cannot be explained by random sampling error but are actual statistical relationships.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	**df**	**Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	29.892[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	30.455	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.055	1	.815
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.00.

The analysis of this p-value deserves specific attention: the likelihood of the chi-square statistic of 29.892 or higher in the case where the null hypothesis of independence is true is lower than 0.1%. This very low probability gives overwhelming evidence against the null hypothesis. At usual significance testing levels of $\alpha = 0.05$ as the critical level, this outcome is much higher than traditional decision criterion, which agrees with a unanimous rejection of the null hypothesis.

The data give strong evidence of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, the null hypothesis $H_0 1$ is rejected and $H_1 1$ is accepted, stating that there is a significant difference in radio listening distribution between the students of Jammu and Kashmir. The results indicate that the regional listening patterns are quite different where Jammu students are characterized by intermediate patterns of engagement and Kashmir students are characterized by polarized patterns with a high degree of non-engagement and intensive listening.

Station preferences

The researchers examined the radio station preference distributions across the two geographical locations of Jammu and Kashmir. Since the data regarding the station preferences was in the form of multiple responses, five independent chi-square tests of independence (Mirchi, Red FM, Big FM, Tadka FM and AIR) were run instead of a single omnibus test. This method permits independent statistical testing of each category of station, proper management of multiple response data structure and individual effect size estimation of each station.

To adjust the Type I error inflation caused by the independent statistical tests, Bonferonni correction was used. The Bonferroni correction is an adjustment made to p-values when several dependent or independent statistical tests are being performed simultaneously on a single data set (McEwan, 2017). So, this correction can be performed by dividing the critical p-value by the number of comparisons made in this study. Hence, after applying the Bonferroni correction, the corrected alpha level, $\alpha = 0.05 \div 5 = 0.0100$. The summary of statistical findings of chi square test are shown in the Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of statistical findings

Station	Jammu (%)	Kashmir (%)	χ^2	df	p-value	Cramér's V
Mirchi	42.0	30.5	5.723	1	0.017	0.120
RedFM	32.5	24.5	3.141	1	0.076	0.089
BigFM	29.5	19.5	5.406	1	0.020	0.116
TadkaFM	12.5	3.5	11.005	1	0.001	0.166
AIR	19.5	18.0	0.148	1	0.701	0.019

Mirchi is the most preferred station for engaged listeners in the two regions, but it does show a regional variation which is conventional significant (p = 0.017) but the p value exceeds the Bonferroni corrected value by 0.0070, leading us to state that while there is a regional trend of preference for Mirchi, it does not reach the stringent standard for multiple-comparison.

The effect size (Cramér's V = 0.120) is small indicating that while region is a significant predictor of preference for Mirchi, the strength of the association is weak. The 11.5 percentage-point difference is the largest descriptive variation of all stations, and it did not reach Bonferroni adjusted significance. The marginal significance suggests that among engaged listeners, Jammu students slightly preferred Mirchi's more music-intensive and youth-centered format than the even more engaged listeners in Kashmir.

Red FM does not reach the conventional level of statistical significance (p = 0.076) although there is an 8.0 percentage-point descriptive difference and 32.5% relative Jammu advantage. The negligible effect size (Cramer's V = 0.089) and the p-value of 0.076 (not yet below the 0.05 level) suggest that there is no significant evidence that region is a significant predictor of Red FM preference among interested listeners.

Big FM shows a parallel trend to Mirchi with marginal significance at conventional level (p = 0.020) and lack of ability to attain Bonferonni-adjusted significance. The effect size (Cramer's V = 0.116) and difference in percentages points (10.0 pp) are between Mirchi and Red FM indicating intermediate regional differentiation.

The marginal significance shows that there is a tendency towards higher Jammu preference to Big FM, which is in line with

the overall Jammu pre-eminence within the commercial FM group. The pattern, however, similarly to Mirchi fails to meet stringent multiple-comparison thresholds.

Tadka FM exhibiting the chi-square value ($p = 0.001$) shows the highly significant (significantly lower than the Bonferonni-adjusted value ($p < 0.0100$)) which gives the exceptionally good evidence that the meaning of regional location is a significant predictor of Tadka FM among engaged radio listeners. The high percentage point difference (9.0 pp) and the highest effect size out of all the stations (Cramer's V = 0.166) are a testament to the fact that there is a strong and significant association between the region.

The extreme disengagement of the listeners of Kashmir with the programming of Tadka FM (3.5% selection) may be associated with linguistic or cultural content mismatch with Kashmir audience preferences, low penetration, marketing or infrastructure to Kashmir, higher preference of other national broadcasts (commercial FM or AIR) by Kashmir listeners.

AIR shows that there is no significant regional differentiation among active listeners. The percentage of the regions is almost the same (19.5% vs. 18.0) and the chi-square value is insignificant ($\chi^2 = 0.148$). The p-value ($p = 0.701$) is very high, and it is much stronger than any significant threshold, which is complete evidence that the public broadcasting also tends to reach cross-regional appeal.

The reason why AIR is so regional is because the station is national in scope, has varied programming formats, and is a public institution. This is in contrast to the commercial stations that need customization to specific regional markets or the regional station that relies on geographic-linguistic alignment, where AIR has broad programming, is distributed nationwide and has a public service mission that has effectively the same appeal to geographically dispersed populations of engaged listeners.

The identification of one statistically significant association of Tadka FM at Bonferroni-corrected $\alpha = 0.0100$, provides empirical basis for rejecting the null hypothesis $H_0 2$ of independence and accepting the alternate hypothesis $H_1 2$ that meaningful regional differences exist in radio station preferences among engaged listeners. In disjunction hypothesis testing, the joint null hypothesis

is rejected even if at least one individual test is significant (Rubin, 2021). It is not necessary for all tests to be significant; the researcher only needs one test to be significant to reject the overall null hypothesis. In this situation, alpha adjustment (e.g., Bonferroni) is appropriate in the context.

Conclusion

This comparative analysis contributes novel evidence that student radio listening habits differ markedly by region in Jammu and Kashmir. The results highlight the paramount significance of the geographic and geographical contexts of behavior in the media consumption. The qualitatively different patterns of listening are observed in the substantive patterns. Jammu students portray the moderate, distributed patterns of listening frequencies whereas Kashmir students portray the polarized patterns of listening that have a high non-listening and proportionally high intensive listening group. These geographical disparities are likely to be the result of intricate interactions between infrastructure accessibility, content availability and attraction, competition in digital media, cultural aspects and heterogeneity of the socioeconomic status.

Traditional listening to the radio may be affected by the unequal use of digital streaming services, internet-based music platforms, and social media. When the penetration of digital platform is more evident among Kashmir students, they might switch streaming services to traditional radio, which will result in high non-listening. The polarized Kashmir trend that is characterized by a high non-listening and high intensive listening might indicate a group of traditionalists or those who do not have access to the digital platforms that have shifted to intensive radio listening and discarded the digital platform altogether.

According to the findings, radio broadcasters and media planners need to use region-specific content and distribution strategies. One programming strategy would not be a suitable fit among the two regions due to their different engagement profile. In the case of Jammu, the broadcasting policies to be employed must focus on raising awareness and trial with the non-listening segment but strengthen casual listening among the sizeable sometimes-listening segment. In case of Kashmir, the strategies should deal

with the large level of disengagement and at the same time formulate content material rich enough to keep the relatively greater number of devoted listeners. Such different strategic needs are a result of the different media market and preferences of the audience in each area.

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