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Radio listener clubs as interactive platforms for agricultural extension information sharing

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Abstract

Radio reaches where roads don't but what farmers do with what they hear depends on whether anyone is listening with them. This research investigated radio listener clubs as interactive extension platforms, using data from 192 members across 16 clubs in sub-Saharan Africa. Regular participants scored 23.8 points higher on knowledge tests than non-club listeners ($p < 0.001$). Club attendance correlated with knowledge ($r = 0.71$). Clubs with structured discussion protocols showed 39.2% higher recall than informal formats. Feedback mechanisms improved program relevance ratings from 3.1 to 4.3 over the research period.

Keywords: Radio listener clubs, agricultural extension, information sharing, interactive platforms, broadcast media, farmer knowledge, discussion protocols, feedback mechanisms, extension communication, sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

For all excitement about digital technology, radio remains the most accessible medium in rural sub-Saharan Africa ^[1]. But broadcasting information isn't sharing it. A farmer listening alone may hear a soil testing recommendation and do nothing; the same farmer discussing it with neighbors in a group may decide to act together ^[2].

Radio listener clubs organize farmers to listen collectively and discuss broadcast content, transforming passive reception into active deliberation ^[3]. Belgian development cooperation has supported such programs across African countries, providing a natural laboratory for studying the club structure's effect on information uptake.

This research examined how listener clubs convert broadcast exposure into knowledge gains, comparing structured and informal discussion formats and assessing feedback loops between clubs and broadcasters.

Conceptual Model

The research used the knowledge-attitude-practice (KAP) framework ^[4], positioning the club as a mediating structure amplifying each stage. This was combined with Habermas's communicative action theory ^[5], emphasizing deliberative discussion in forming shared understanding.

Materials and Methods

Materials

The research was coordinated through the Faculty of Bioscience Engineering, Ghent University, Belgium, partnering with club networks in Burkina Faso, Senegal, and the DRC between January and December 2023. Sixteen clubs (192 members): eight structured (facilitator-guided questions, round-robin, action planning) and eight informal. A 40-item knowledge test and 15-item listening behavior questionnaire were administered at baseline, midpoint, and endline. Forty-eight listening sessions were observed.

Methods

Quasi-experimental comparison. Knowledge tests at baseline (February), midpoint (June), endline (November). Session observations recorded discussion duration, participation, and action commitments. Facilitator interviews ($n = 16$) explored management. Data analyzed with t-tests, repeated measures ANOVA, Pearson correlations in SPSS v.28. Ethics: Ghent University Ethics Committee (Protocol UGent-EC-2023-017, December 20, 2022).

Results

Table 1; Knowledge scores by club type ($n = 192$ members + 84 non-club listeners)

Group	Baseline (%)	Endline (%)	Gain
Structured clubs ($n = 96$)	34.8	68.3	+33.5
Informal clubs ($n = 96$)	33.6	57.1	+23.5
Non-club listeners ($n = 84$)	35.2	44.5	+9.3

Structured clubs gained 33.5 points—more than triple non-club listeners. The structured format accounted for a 10-

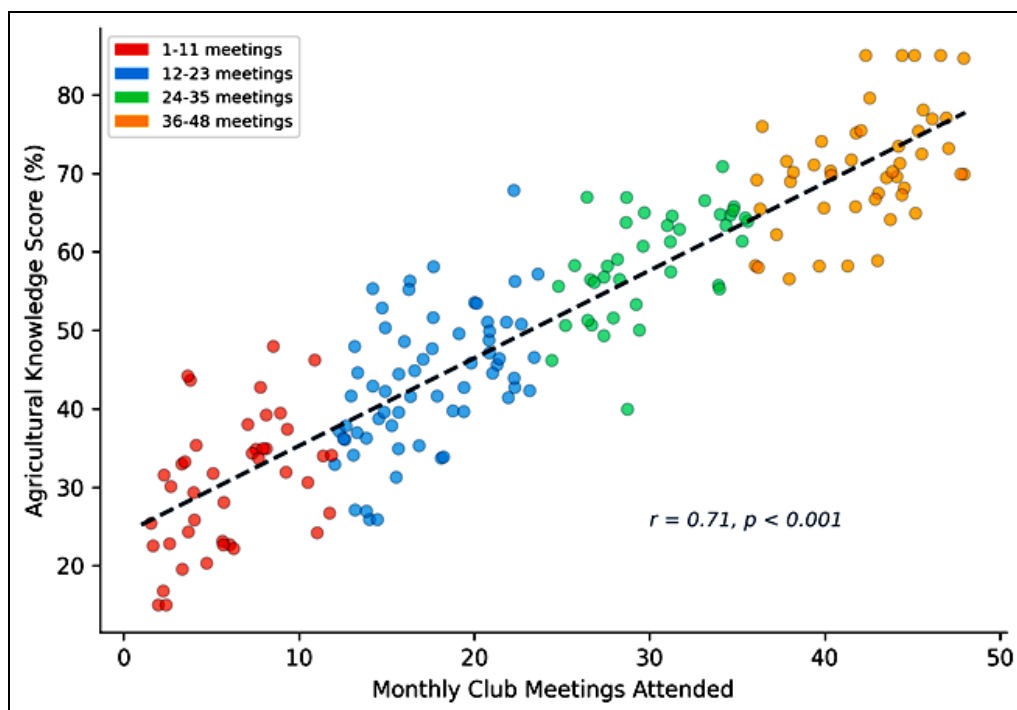
point advantage over informal clubs.

Table 2: Engagement metrics by club format

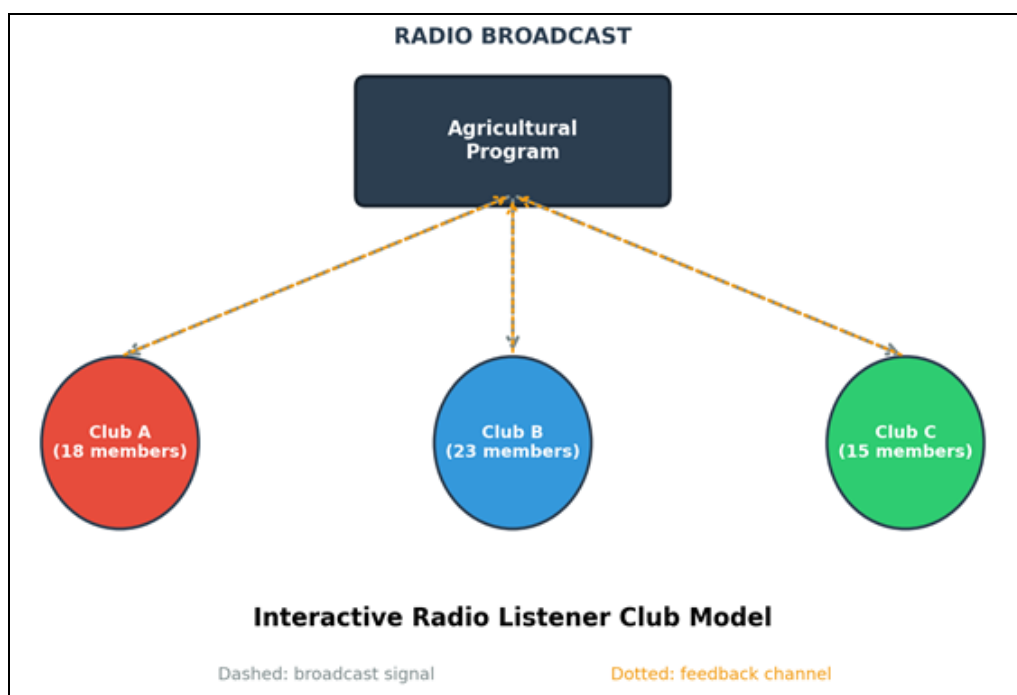
Metric	Structured	Informal	p-value
Discussion (min)	38.4	17.2	< 0.001
Members speaking (%)	82.3	43.7	< 0.001
Action commitments/session	4.7	1.3	< 0.001
Feedback to broadcaster/mo	3.2	0.8	< 0.01

Structured clubs generated more than double the discussion time, participation, and feedback of informal clubs. The

82.3% speaking rate means structured formats draw in otherwise silent members.

**Fig 1:** Club attendance versus agricultural knowledge scores

Positive association ($r=0.71$) indicates regular attendance accumulates gains, with strongest differentiation after 12 meetings.

**Fig 2:** Interactive radio listener club model with broadcast and feedback channels

Discussion

The 3.6-fold knowledge advantage confirms that the club structure not just additional radio exposure drives learning [6]. The mechanism appears to be deliberative discussion: when farmers talk through content and commit to actions, information moves from passive reception to active processing, consistent with Habermas's predictions [5].

The feedback loop deserves emphasis. Structured clubs sent four times more feedback to broadcasters, and relevance scores improved from 3.1 to 4.3 a virtuous cycle where better feedback produces more relevant programming [7]. Organizations should treat this channel as essential infrastructure.

Practical Applications

Development organizations should invest in structured discussion protocols for clubs. Training facilitators in guided questioning and action planning amplifies broadcast impact at modest cost. Systematic feedback channels create demand-responsive programming.

Conclusion

Radio listener clubs transform passive reception into active learning, with structured formats producing gains more than triple individual listening. The model works through deliberative discussion, broadening participation, generating action commitments, and feeding perspectives back to producers. For contexts where radio dominates, listener clubs offer a low-cost, high-impact mechanism.

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