



Journal of Communication and Management

ISSN: 2583-617X (Online)

Journal home page: <https://jcoma.com>

Research Article

DOI: 10.58966/JCM2023221

Community Radio Empowering the Rural Women of Rajasthan in India

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 01 May, 2023

Revised: 13 May, 2023

Accepted: 17 June, 2023

Published: 25 June, 2023

Keywords:

Community radio, Empowerment, Rural community, Rural women, Skill development.

ABSTRACT

The empowerment of women is linked to the gender concept. Community radios play crucial role in educating women about their rights. They provide opportunities to learn and improve their skills because it is essential for women's economic development. Besides this, it also promotes women's social, political and cultural empowerment. The present study is an attempt to analyze the role of community radio in empowering women in India. Research Methodology: A sample of one hundred women volunteers was selected for the study through an appropriate probability sampling method. The primary data have been collected through the interview schedule while the secondary data have been collected through the published material and e-resources.

INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women is linked to the gender concept. Gender is the set of social characteristics that shape the role of men, women and other sexes (in the binary vision, but there can be a lot of various genders). Empowerment can be carried out in a broad range of societies, particularly in the economy and policy. Women empowerment is a major issue in India, especially in rural areas (Mandal, 2013). In the last three decades, high and constant economic growth has contributed to women's empowerment. The number of female workers in both organized and unorganized sectors has gone up. Many women got leadership roles in big corporations as well as in SMEs. Community radio is one of the key sources used to educate people about women's empowerment. It may not be a very popular term in Indian cities but the word is not new in rural areas. There are 289 operational community radio stations in India compared to 41 in 2009. The term "Community Radio" refers to a radio station

operated by local residents who develop and broadcast their own content. It's a place where members of the community may get together and work on projects. The concept of locally embedded, small-scale broadcasting, which has been manufactured and operated by the people for a while now, was first coined in 1996 in the Populace of the Neighborhood Radio (for instance US amateur broadcasters before World War I). One of the distinguishing characteristics of Community Radio and media shall be localism. Voice of the poor voiceless and mouthpiece of oppressed people and as a growth platform in general. Women empowerment is more required in rural India because women living in bucolic areas are illiterate, jobless and more vulnerable to injustice (Bhat, 2015). Community radios are playing crucial role in educating women about their rights (Nirmala, 2015). There are many community radios for women empowerment that vulnerable women run. They create awareness among women volunteers and provide them a platform to speak.

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Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Empowerment of women living in rural areas is impossible without educating them (Sharma and Kashyap, 2015). They cannot go to school because their families believe that a woman's job is to manage the kitchen and do household chores. A person needs some medium to learn, like a school, mobile phone with internet, television or any other informal source of learning. Rural women cannot access any of these, but listening to radios while working in the kitchen or cleaning the house is possible. Another significance of community radio is the ability to inform. Most women in bucolic regions do not have any information about laws. They are unaware of Maternity Rights, Dowry Prohibition Act and other government welfare policies. Community radios organize shows where they call political leaders and senior government officials to deliver their message and answer the questions of vulnerable women. The debate of rural people, success stories of vulnerable women, songs, stories and poems are the key content of community radios.

Women Empowerment: Women make up half of India's population, yet their standing is changing. We cannot deny that they are still discriminated against, ostracized, and mistreated because of their gender. Woman empowerment is a process that allows a powerless woman to gain independence, confidence, and control over her life. Having power is engaging and contributing meaningfully and creatively in the process of social development. It empowers them to speak up against oppression, injustice, exploitation, abuse, and violence. Community Radio and Women Participation in India: The airwaves are public property, according to a 1995 verdict by the Supreme Court of India. With the government's support of starting radio stations at well-known educational institutions, the 'community radio' concept has gained traction. It resulted in the development of campus radio stations capable of transmitting across a 10–15 kilometers distance. As per the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting more than 350 CRS are operational in the country. Many CRs have occurred throughout the country, and women's participation has shown to be one of the most effective accelerators of change for community welfare. Radio Banasthali, Kamalvani, Radio Madhuban, Tilonia Community Radio of Rajasthan and NammaDwani (Our Voices), Sangam Radio, Radio Namaskar & Manndeshi Tarang of other states are just a few of the CR stations that have worked tirelessly to empower women through this medium, allowing them to participate as listeners, activists, and contributors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the book *Community Radio and Empowerment*, Steve Buckley (2006) observes that independent, public-society oriented media activities and organizations centered on social goals rather than individual financial gain can be related to community media. Community radio is the

history of people and groups that want to be known and remembered. It helps individuals from all walks of life and rural areas to reach them. There is a broad variety of evidence of mass media explicitly related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including enhancing livelihoods, and fostering social equity and sustainability. The advantage of CR is how it empowers underprivileged people to speak up for themselves. Engagement from the local population in a locality clearly indicates the empowerment provided by mass media. Mass media empowerment will support economic growth by enabling citizens to monitor their living environments, identify their interests and challenges, and have access to information and resources to enable responsible decision-making. It will also help to rule effectively by exposing injustice and holding officials accountable. Pavarala & Malik (2007) in the book titled *Other Voices: The struggle for community radio in India* describes about the other people who tried hard to be noticed over the airwaves in India which had soared to a climax in 2005 beyond constant stream. This book spoke about many NGOs and media operators in India campaigning for the right of communities to create cost-effective local broadcasting facilities. This discusses about organizations that have put some initiatives to broadcast radio programs to support community development in India. *Women Speak to Women: UNESCO* had supported the set up of a community FM radio station at the Machnoor village of Andhra Pradesh in 1998 under the leadership of rural women from Dalit community. The women have aimed to promote the rich Telangana culture over radio among the local villages. The findings of the research project 'Science for Women' undertaken by Banasthali Community FM radio station in January 2008 suggests that there was a scientific awareness among women in the Banasthali FM listening zone by empowering them with practical scientific knowledge for everyday living by a series of 180 programmes on the theme in radio magazine format produced and aired by Banasthali FM Radio for one full year. The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) spearheaded the initiative, which was backed by the Rashtriya Vigyan Evam Prodyogiki Sanchar Parishad (RVPS) of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, New Delhi. Balan, and Norman (2012) have been carried out their studied on one of the most concerned topic – "Community Radio (CR) – Participatory Communication Tool for Rural Women Development". For this purpose, to measure the extent at which community radio has played its role in empowering women, the researchers have made investigation around one of the community radios of India – Puduvaivani, in which detailed analysis has done by including the participation of 100 women respondents of Pillaichavady to taken their views on chosen topic (closer area of Puduvaivani). Through this quantitative analysis, it has been concluded that the given community radio station



has successfully achieved its main intention behind women empowerment, which is to encourage women to enhance their control over those decisions that can affect their lives within and outside their homes. Dahal (2013) has made a report on “Power, empowerment and community radio” by covering the area of South Asia and Nepal, to analyze how women through this medium are acknowledged with the current issues that affect and advocate their rights. So, on the basis of report, it has been revealed that radio community has brought the Violence against Women into the community for women empowerment. Y. Nirmala (2015) studied in her research paper ‘The Role of Community Radio in empowering women in India’ that community radio is playing a vital role in empowering women and making them aware. She studied in a communication campaign group based in Bangalore, named ‘Awaaz’. Here she studied many non-government community radios. She found that community radio plays an important role in women’s psychological, economic, cultural, political and social improvement. Thus, women have become aware of health, education, cleanliness, pollution control and savings. In this way, the entire personality of women has developed through community radio. Mhagamaa (2015) has made research on “Harnessing the potential of community radio in empowering rural women in Malawi”, to examine the potential of community radio in empowering rural women by drawing investigation on Malwa’s community radio station – Nkhotakota, which was started broadcasting in the year 2003. He has used focus group discussions with women volunteers of this radio station and semi-structured interviews with its deputy station management and some NGOs working in the Malawi community, to collect primary data which was further analyzed by using qualitative thematic analysis. Sharma and Kashyap (2015) has conducted a study on “Community radio: A community media module for the empowerment of rural women”, aiming to develop community radio module needs to empower women of rural areas. For this purpose, 1000 respondents have been selected by researchers via census methods of Shantipuri, Gokulnagar, Jawaharnagar and some villages of Udham Nagar of Uttarakhand. Iyer and Vats (2018) have critically analyzed how community radio through programs like ViitiyaVaani helps bring literacy among rural women about how to open account and resolve other financial problems. For this purpose, case analysis is done on number of community radios, including Namma Dhwani (Karnataka) Manndeshi Tarang (Maharashtra), Anna FM (Tamilnadu) and Alfaz-e-Mewat etc. This research has evaluated that radio community today, become a major source for empowerment of women by bringing awareness among them about financial literacy, how to fight back against domestic violence and give courage to speak out in public against any issues. The report of the project ‘Radio Mathematics for Artisans Women’ undertaken by Kamalvani 90.4 FM in 2018 reveals that it brought to mind

the possibility of attempting an oral medium like riding radio waves to make mathematics learning exceptionally interesting. Local artisan women were the primary target group of the project as there was a requirement of basic mathematics in their day to day life. Prasad and Deepak (2019) conduct study on “Community radio and women empowerment: A pragmatic investigation” to analyze how much social changes have been brought by community radio through women empowerment, aiming to access its need of establishment in rural societies. To do this study, seven hypotheses have been set and tested via the application of the Goodness-of-fit model index, and some published articles related to the efficiency of community radio in women empowerment have also been reviewed to address the main objectives. So, from all over the study, researchers have concluded that community radio has become an effective tool in empowering women to get control on entire things which affect life of them, and bring vision and aspirations as well as other qualities that improve their status in community. Fomand and Jivane (2019) has carried out study on “The role of community radios in information dissemination to rural women in South Africa”, with aim to investigate the contribution of community radio in providing information to rural women for their well-being and development in society. A case study approach of research has been applied on two main community radios of South Africa viz. Inanda FM and Maputaland (in KwaZulu-Natal) to establish key personnel’s perception and views in managing such community radios. Through the findings of this paper, it has been examined that these radios however, help in empowering women through disseminating information, but still number of factors present that brings challenges to broadcasting the issues related to women.

The review of relevant literature suggests that it is important to study the impact of community radio on the women community of a backward district of Rajasthan. The Tonk district is one of the most backward districts of Rajasthan and the brief analysis of the Tonk district on women empowerment can capitulate some insights into sociological and cultural aspects of marginalized section i.e. women of society.

OBJECTIVES

This study’s key objective is to evaluate Community Radio’s impact on women empowerment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study’s methodological approach is quantitative in nature. It is used to conduct quantitative analysis through interview scheduling. The list of questions includes closed-ended inquiries about participation and skill improvement. A data sheet was created for the statistical analysis of the responses once the data from the completed question schedule was submitted into

the computer system using the Google form. In addition to gathering a lot of data for research, this technique of data collection aids in identifying the community's silent members from other groups.

Sampling

The CRS is chosen using the non-probability method of purposeful sampling. The location of the radio station serves as the selection factor, with stations located in rural areas preferred for the study. It was crucial to choose radio stations that would best serve the state's rural communities because the study was intended to shed light on the intervention of community radio as a tool for rural women's empowerment. In Rajasthan's Tonk district, Radio Banasthali 90.4 FM was chosen as the community radio station for this study. The census approach gathers the quantitative data. Every single unit in the universe is chosen for data gathering in the census approach. All 100 village women who volunteer for CR stations are included in the survey because the respondents are the community radio volunteers of the nearby villages.

Data Collection

The interview schedule is used to gather primary data in order to assess the level of involvement and skill development of the village volunteers. To fulfill the goal of this study, data were gathered in order to analyze the general response of the underprivileged groups in light of several factors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The acquired information was combined, collated, and then properly formatted in rows and columns for analysis. Chi-square, regression, and correlation approaches have all been employed to analyze the data using SPSS.

The answers to the questions about how you pick up any technical, computer, hardware, or software abilities via regular contact with CRS are shown in Table 1. In this regard, the results showed that the majority of respondents, or 95% of them, had technical knowledge and skills through regular contact with the CRS. The same data is represented and condensed graphically in Figure 1.

Table 1: Learning skills from regular association

S.No.	Technical knowledge/skill	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	95	95%
2	No	5	5%
Total		100	100.0

Table 2: Learning social media skills

S.No.	Social Media Skills	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	95	95
2	No	5	5
Total		100	100

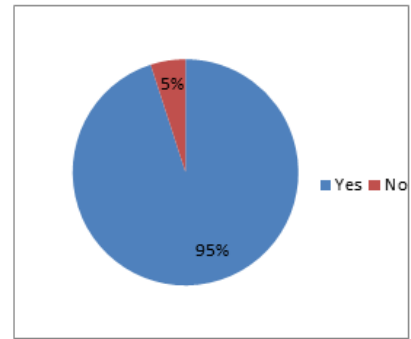


Figure 1: Learning skills from regular association

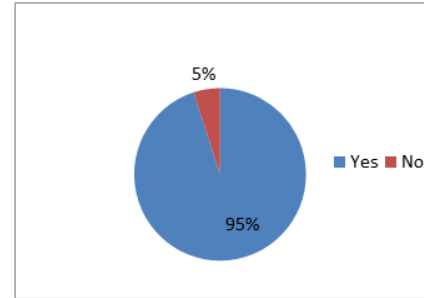


Figure: 2 Learning social media skills

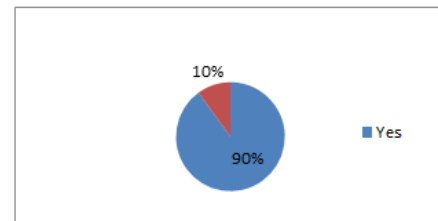


Figure 3: Role of CRS in improving your understanding about social media or smart phone apps

The Table 2 shows the response how you learn social media skills through the CRS. It shows 95% of them learnt Social media skills. On the other hand, 5% of the respondents highlighted that they did not learnt Social Media skills through the CRS (Figure 2).

The replies to the question of whether they agree with CRS's role in helping them better comprehend social media or mobile apps are shown in the table above. It was discovered that 90% of respondents agreed with this idea, while the remaining 10% of respondents disagreed. The same is seen in Figure 3.

Table 3: Understanding about social media or smartphone apps

S.No.	Understanding	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	90	90
2	No	10	10
Total		100	100

Table 4: Addressing any local social issue/problem

S.No.	Social Issue	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	90	90%
2	No	10	10%
Total		100	100.0

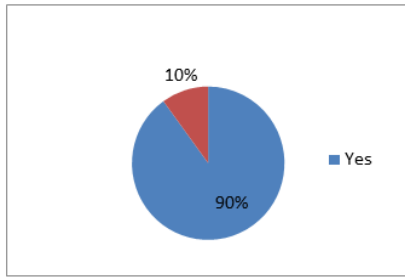


Figure 4: Addressed any local social issue/problem

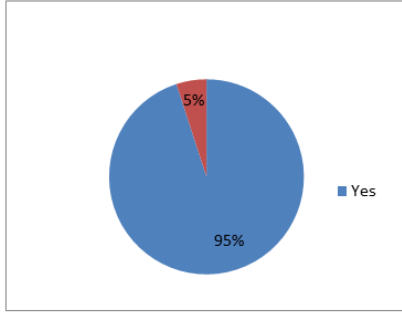


Figure 5: Using new/different formats

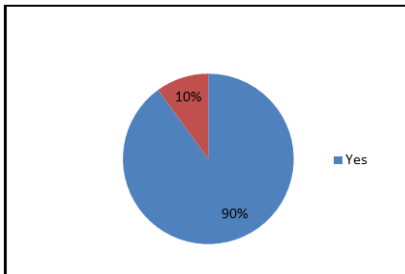


Table 6: Expressing your views/concerns regarding Health care/hygiene/Family planning/Child Education, in your family

According to the chart above, if respondents agreed they could solve any local social issue or problem through community radio programming, they were asked to emphasize their thoughts on the idea. In this regard, it was discovered that 90% of respondents agreed with the aforementioned phenomenon, while 10% of them did not. The graph below displays the identical (Figure 4).

Table 5: Using new/different formats

S.No.	Different formats in radio programmes	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	95	95
2	No	5	5
Total		100	100

Figure 6: Expressing views/concerns regarding Health care/hygiene/Family planning/Child Education, in your family

S.No.	Health care/hygiene/Family planning/Child Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	90	90
2	No	10	10
Total		100	100

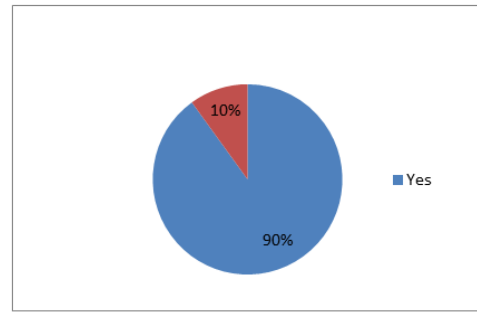


Figure 7: Expressing views/concerns regarding social issues in the Gram Panchayat/Gramsabha/Social meetings/Social development programmes/Chaupal/community radio listeners club

Table 5 illustrates responses that they used new/different formats in radio programmes. It was found that 95% of the respondents agreed while the remaining 5% of the participants disagreed with the same. The Figure 5 shows the same.

The chart above shows that respondents were also asked if they had discussed their opinions or concerns with their family members on health care, hygiene, family planning, and children's education. 90% of the respondents agreed with the same conclusion, while the remaining 10% disagreed. The same is seen in Figure 6.

The chart above demonstrates that participants were asked whether they have voiced their opinions or concerns about social issues at Gramme Panchayat, Gramsabha, social gatherings, social development activities, Chaupal, or the community radio listeners club. In this regard, it was discovered that 90% of respondents concurred that they have spoken their opinions or worries about social issues in their local Gramme Panchayat, Gramsabha, social gatherings, social development initiatives, Chaupal, or community radio listeners club. 10% of them also disagreed with the same conclusion. The same is seen in Figure 7.

The responses to questions on whether participants objected or freely voiced their concerns about social injustices or unethical behavior that predomi

Table 7: Expressing views/concerns regarding social issues in the Gram Panchayat/Gramsabha/Social meetings/Social development programmes/Chaupal/community radio listeners club

S.No.	Social Issues	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	90	90
2	No	10	10
Total		100	100

Table 8: Expressing your concerns freely on social evils/malpractices prevailed in the community

S.No.	Express your concerns	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	85	85
2	No	15	15
Total		100	100

nated in the community are shown in Table 8. Accordingly, it was discovered that 85% of them agreed with this, while the remainder people either disagreed or freely expressed their concerns about social injustices and unethical behavior that were prevalent in society. The following figure 8 demonstrates the same

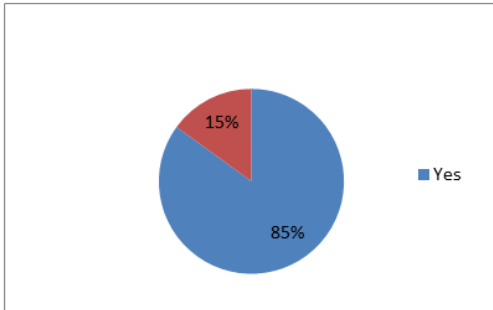


Figure 8: Expressing your concerns freely on social evils/malpractices prevailed in the community

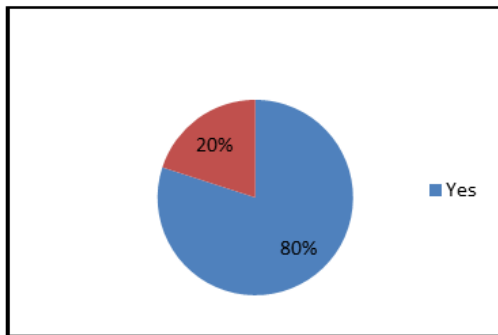


Figure: 9 Taking decision in matters of Purchases/Health care/Family planning/Child education/Family functions/Marriage

Table 9: Taking decision in matters of Purchases/Health care/Family planning/Child education/Family functions/Marriage

S.No.	Take decision	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	80	80
2	No	20	20
Total		100	100

Table 10: Taking decision in matters of farming (seed selection/crop/selling) earnings/savings/Financial/economic issues (investment/business)

S.No.	Take decision in matter of farming	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	65	65
2	No	35	35
Total		100	100

Table 11: CRS helped in starting any small scale business/economic activity

S.No.	Small scale business/economic activity	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	75	75
2	No	25	25
Total		100	100

Table 12: Taking decision in matters of Participation/Voting in elections

S.No.	Participation/Voting in elections	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	75	75
2	No	25	25
Total		100	100

The chart above shows that respondents were also asked if they make decisions for their family when it comes to things like health care, hygiene, family planning, children's education, family functions, and marriage. 80% of respondents agreed with the same conclusion, while the remaining 20% disagreed. The same is seen in Figure 9.

As shown in Table 10 above, respondents were also asked if they made decisions for their family's farming (seed selection/crop/selling), earnings/savings/financial/economic difficulties (investment/business), and so on. The results showed that 35% of respondents disagreed, 65% agreed. The same is seen in the Figure 10.

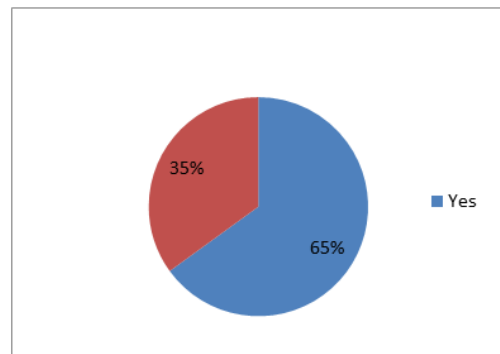


Figure 10: Taking decision in matters of farming (seed selection/crop/selling) earnings/savings/Financial/economic issues (investment/business)

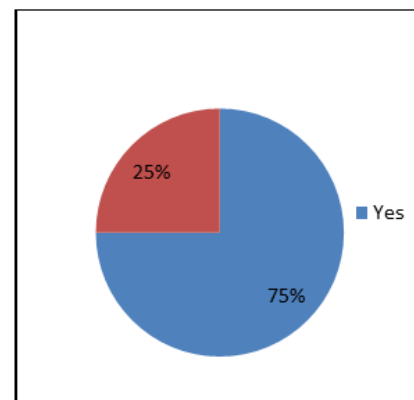


Figure 11: CRS helped in starting any small scale business/economic activity

The response to the question "Did CRS help in starting any small business/economic activity" is shown in Table 11. The results showed that 75% of the respondents agreed and that only 25% of them disagreed. The same is seen in Figure 11.

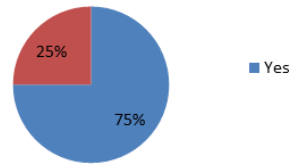


Figure: 12 Taking decision in matters of Participation/Voting in elections

Table 12 shows respondents' decisions about election participation and voting. The results showed that 75% of the respondents agreed and that only 25% of them disagreed. The same is seen in Figure 12.

CONCLUSION

More than 95% of the female volunteers reported that they now freely discuss and voice their opinions and worries in household settings as well as other forums, including programme panchayats and public gatherings on topics like health care, hygiene, family planning, child education, and other social issues. This shows that their comprehension of these issues has improved, and they are now qualified to discuss them in any venue. This demonstrates how the community radio station greatly influenced these volunteers' awareness of social and family concerns. Many volunteers indicated that they had previously been quite hesitant to communicate their ideas and opinions, but since joining the CRS, their confidence has grown and they can now do so freely. It implies that taking part in community radio encourages the growth of self-expression, self-assurance, and public speaking abilities. The findings are in line with the definitions of empowerment, particularly those that relate to community radio, and it can be inferred that community radio stations are essential for the empowerment of rural women.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: Pareek, R., Sharma, L., Drolia, R. (2023). Community Radio Empowering the Rural Women of Rajasthan in India. *Journal of Communication and Management*, 2(2), 81-87. DOI: 10.58966/JCM2023221