

Community Radio By Marginalized Communities: A Study Of Socio-Economic Profile Of Community Radio Volunteers

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Abstract

The community media deals with the issues that concern a particular community or locality, as it is not possible for the mainstream media to reach out to the every nook and corner of the country. Community radio is for the community, of the community and by the community. The literature and previous research studies suggests a radio is the community radio in true sense if it is run and managed by the local community members i.e. community radio volunteers. The present research paper primarily focuses on two aspects. First, to identify whether the CRS are being run the way they should or not, i.e., if community members are actually participating in it, if they are active enough, if they are getting equal opportunities and so on. Since the whole purpose of a CRS is to represent the community members and to work for their welfare, it should be ensured that they are getting involved in it. Secondly, the study also highlights the socio-economic profiles of the people who are working as volunteers for these radio stations. Four well known and community radio stations located in the rural areas of Rajasthan state of India have been chosen using purposive sampling method. The research is mainly a quantitative one and uses primary data as the main source of information. For the collection of primary data, the interviews were conducted with 100 volunteers using a question schedule. A thorough analysis of all the data has been done using SPSS to come to a conclusion.

Keywords: -media; community; community radio; volunteers, socio-economic

1. Introduction

The most common form of community media in developing countries is community radio since it can access large masses and overcome illiteracy with less cost. Communication through mass media allows the transmission of messages with social and cultural values for sustaining the society. Development of the community is the mission of community radio; it does the mission by enabling grass root level of participation of the society in the expression of ideas and opinions. Community radio is a platform that provides aims and plans to improve the life of people and on a longer run it can contribute an explanation on the coherent narrative of the development of the region. Community media is a participatory media evolved out of the dissatisfaction on mainstream media and its content, functions on

the basis of participatory democracy and principles of free expression and promotes community solidarity and improves community relations. “community radio is a radio station operated by the community members with community interests in mind without the constraints of making a profit” (Gordon, 2006). In ‘community radio’, community represents a group of underrepresented or unprivileged community in a specific locality. It can be the marginalized communities or migrants in a locality. Technological changes cause shift in the traditional media audience based on their race, class, ethnicity, habitat and ideology. The media world is completely fragmented and the changing scenario empowers communities across the country to take control over the media broadcasting in their area. “The community can be territorial or geographical township, village, district or island and can also be a group of people with common interests, who are not necessarily living in one defined territory. Thus, community radio may be owned and managed by one group or combined groups. It could also be run controlled and run by people such as women, farmers, fisherfolk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens” (Tabing, 2006).

The community radio volunteers are the key stakeholders in operation of a community radio station. The normative condition suggests that a community radio station is run and managed by the volunteers of local community and one of the objectives of the station is to give the voice to these voiceless volunteers of marginalized communities. This paper is an attempt to explore and understand the socio economic conditions of community radio volunteers.

1.2 Community Radio in India

According to the judgment of the honorable Supreme Court of India in 1995, the airwaves are public property. The idea of ‘community radio’ has emerged in to light with the government approval of launching radio stations to highly recognized educational institutions. It has led to the establishment of campus radio stations which had a capacity to transmit in a distance of 10-15 Kms. In 2006, the plan of the then existing government was to launch a minimum of 4000 community radio stations. Community Radio Guidelines of 2006 have permitted schools, agricultural research institutes and non-profit agencies to establish community radio stations that operate only with the involvement of local communities in a specific region. Unfavorable conditions have hindered the growth of community radio stations in India and by 2020 the number of total community radio stations in the country is recorded as 202 only. The Rajasthan state of India has been selected as study area for this study. At present (at the time of writing) nine community radio stations are operational in the state, out of which four are being operated by the educational institutions and five are licensed to the NGOs.

2. Review of Literature

Traber (1985) studied the forms of alternative media and classified it in two categories i.e. 'advocacy media' and 'grassroots media'. He noted that the advocacy media represents alternative social factors including, 'the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. He further argues when the work of media production is given to ordinary people they can become reporters, writers and editors. Community Radio (CR) along with national and regional broadcasting services is a third type of radio service in India. CR

is a medium for the unheard group of people to make their voice audible to the other sections of the society (Nirmala., 2015). CR has a high value in Indian society by creating a sense of belongingness among the marginalized sections of the society. Marginalized sections of the society are the voiceless group of people in Indian society. CR is the low-cost media that can reach out to the poor and women of the society to support them in expressing their voice concerning their issues, concerns and disadvantages (Dutta., 2014). CR in India can be the best way to create awareness among the marginalized sections of the society by informing them about their fundamental rights and entitlements (MIB., 2014). Khan, (2010) in the research paper titled *Role of Community Radio in Rural Development*, examines that after independence India had achieved tremendous growth in many sectors of the economy. This strategy includes supporting local community media, at least at the grassroots level, to improve economic growth.

Krishna et.al (2017), opined that community radio is a form of radio used to support people, promotes expression, participation and that values of local culture. Its purpose is to make a voice heard of those who do not have voices, to marginalized groups and to communities far from large population. *Community Radio and Empowerment* of Steve Buckley (2006) observes that Community media can be related to autonomous, public society-focused media ventures and organizations, which therefore centered not on private financial benefits, but instead on social goals. These are usually run by State, municipal, staff, educational, social, or cultural groups or organizations representing one or more of these types of civil society. Balan and Norman (2012) identified CR as the most accessible mass media resource for grass root citizens. According to Sharma and Kashyap (2014), the community radio operates as a means of providing voice to powerless people for voiceless power. It tackles rural women's concerns by offering a bottom-up strategy. The analysis of the listener demographic is very significant before the planning and production of community radio programs. A research on the socio-economic dynamics of rural women was then performed. The findings revealed that rural women belonged to the community of the middle aged, could read and write, had a typical family, had moderate income, and were not formally socially engaged.

3. Research questions

Community empowerment through community radio in terms of an excellent medium of communication at grass root level has been proved but is it being operated and managed by the village volunteers? Do they produce and present the community radio programmes? What is the demographic and socio-economic profile of these volunteers? These questions are the driving force behind the study.

4. Objectives

The key objective of this study is

- To know the demographic and socio-economic profile of the community radio volunteers.

5. Operational definition

5.1 Community Radio Volunteers: The members of community who are involved in the operation of a community radio station.

5.2 Marginalized Community: Group of people who are oppressed and deprived of basic needs. The women and community members of ST/SC/OBC and low economic groups are considered as members of ‘marginalized communities’ in the present study.

6. Research Methodology

The methodological approach adopted for the present study is quantitative in nature. For quantitative analysis a questionnaire is used to conduct the interviews with the community radio volunteers. The question air comprises of closed ended questions related to demography, frequency of participation, and the socio-economic profile of volunteers. This method of data collection helps to gather a lot of research information, but also helps to distinguish voiceless people amongst the other sections of the community. A detailed question schedule has been enclosed as annexure ‘A’ in the appendix.

6.1 Selection of CRS

The selection criteria for community radio station includes (1) Different models of operational community radio stations in Rajasthan (2) The community radio station situated in the rural settings. Four community radio stations were selected using the purposive sampling method. The community radio stations selected for this study are Kamalvani 90.4 FM in *Jhunjhunu* district, Radio Banasthali 90.4 FM in *Tonk* district, Radio Madhuban 90.4 FM in *Sirohi* district and Tilonia Radio 90.8 FM in *Banswara* district of Rajasthan. All well-known community radio stations in the state have been serving the community for many years and hence are well placed and positioned in their respective communities. (SeeTable: 1.1)

Table1.1: Selected Community Radio Stations

S.No.	Name of CRS	Address	Category
1.	Kamalvani	Kamalnishtha Sansthan, Kolsia, ,Jhunjhunu- 333042, Rajasthan (India)	NGO
2.	Radio Banasthali	Banasthali Vidyapith, Tonk- 304022 Rajasthan (India)	Educational
3.	Radio Madhuban	Brahma Kumaris, Abu Road, Sirohi – 307510, Rajasthan (India)	Educational
4.	Tilonia Radio	Barefoot College, Tilonia, Ajmer – 305816, Rajasthan (India)	NGO

6.2 Period of the study

The study was carried out in the year 2019 during the month of April-august.

6.3 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in the study is the non-probability of sampling. In order to serve the purpose of the study the purposive sampling is considered in this analysis. The sample was selected according the criteria fixed for the participants as a community radio volunteers. The sample of 100 community radio volunteers was selected for the study. The table 1.2 represents the details of the samples selected from the radio stations. A detailed list of respondents has been enclosed as annexure 'B' in the appendix.

Table1.2: Samples selected from Community Radio Stations

Name of CRS	No. of respondents	Gender
Kamalvani 90.4 FM	04	Female
	12	Male
Radio Banasthali 90.4 FM	38	Female
	22	Male
Radio Madhuban 90.4 FM	07	Female
	07	Male
Tilonia Radio 90.4 FM	01	Female
	09	Male

7. Data analysis techniques

The data collected was consolidated, tabulated and analyzed in the form of rows and columns, along with the correct formatting of the data. The data collected was filtered, classified and tabulated in order to produce the best possible results from the statistical study. The method used for statistical analysis in this study is "SPSS Statistics," version 20.

8. Data Analysis and Findings

8.1 Demographic profile of volunteers

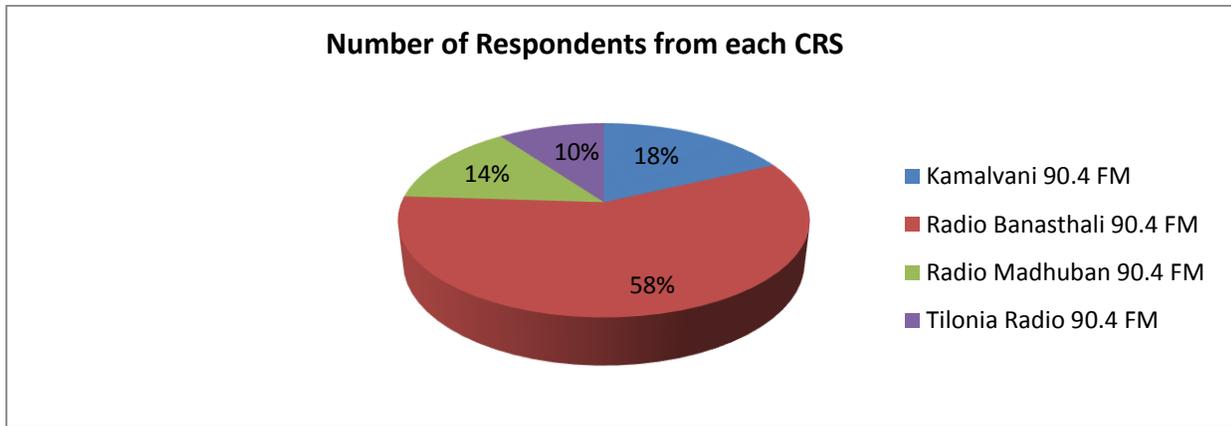


Figure 1.1 : Number of Respondents from each CRS

A total of 100 volunteers participated in the survey where the fig.1.1 reveals that 58% of volunteers, a good majority of the respondents were from Radio Banasthali. This was followed by Kamalvani with 18%, Radio Madhuban with 14% and Tilonia Radio with rest 10% of the total respondents.

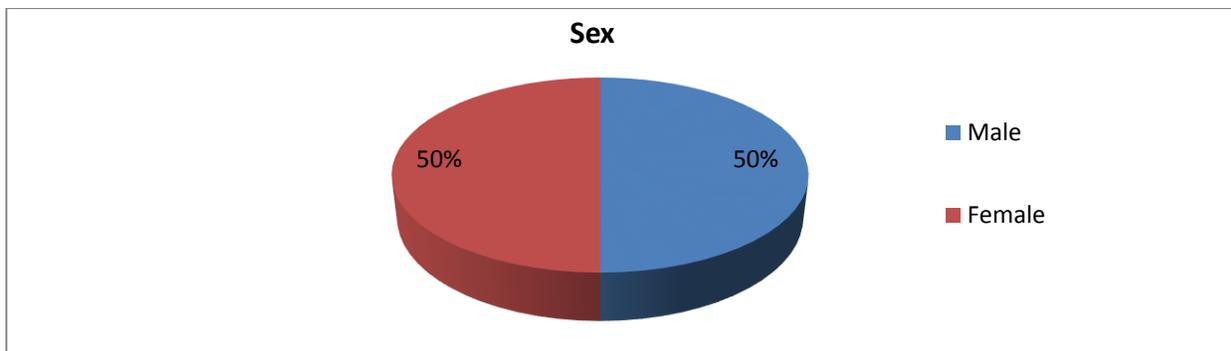


Figure 1.2 : Sex Ratio

The fig. 1.2 implies that 50% of these participants were males while the rest 50% were females.

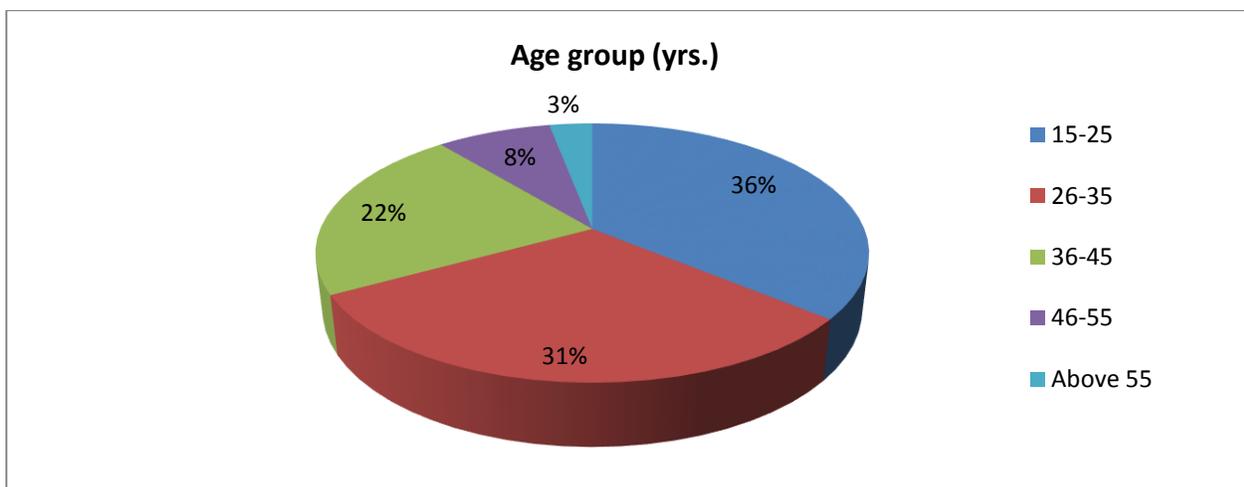


Figure 1.3 : Age Ratio

The fig. 1.3 reveals that volunteers from all age groups participated in the survey where 36 participants were between the age of 15-25 years, 31 participants between 26-35 years, 22 participants between 36-45 years, 8 participants between 46-55 years and remaining 3 were above 55 years.

8.2 Participatory trends

To understand the participatory trend of volunteers the researcher asked the questions related to period of association with the CRS, frequency of participation and nature of produced programmes.

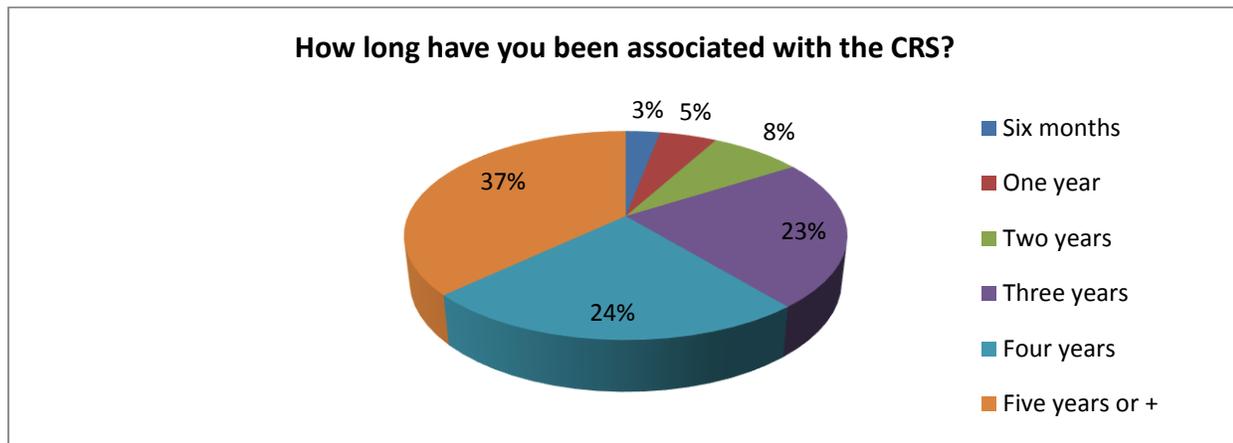


Figure 1.4: Association with CRS

The fig. 1.4 reveals that a majority of 37% participants they have been working with CRS for more than five years. This was followed by 24% and 23% participants claiming to have four years and three years of experience respectively. Out of the remaining respondents, 8% had two years of experience, 5% had one year of experience while 3% were those who joined recently with six months of experience.

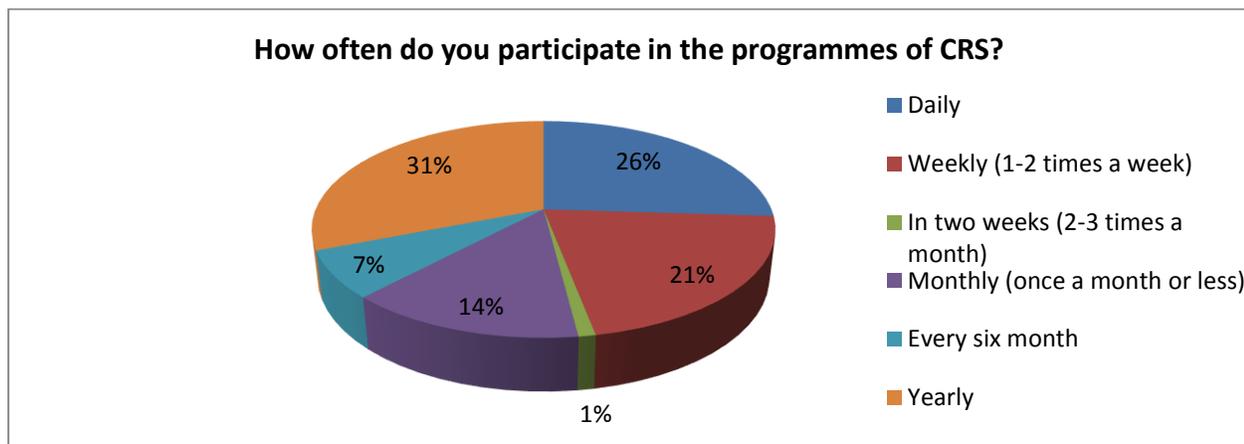


Figure 1.5 : Participation in the programmes of CRS

Now, in order to get an idea of their involvement in the radio programmes, the researcher asked them about the frequency of their participation in these programmes. Interestingly, 31% people said they do a program only once a year while 26% people said that they present programmes on a daily basis. There were other 21%, 14%, 7% and 1% who said they participate weekly, monthly, every six months and fortnightly respectively. To say, there was a significant variation in the participation of the respondents.

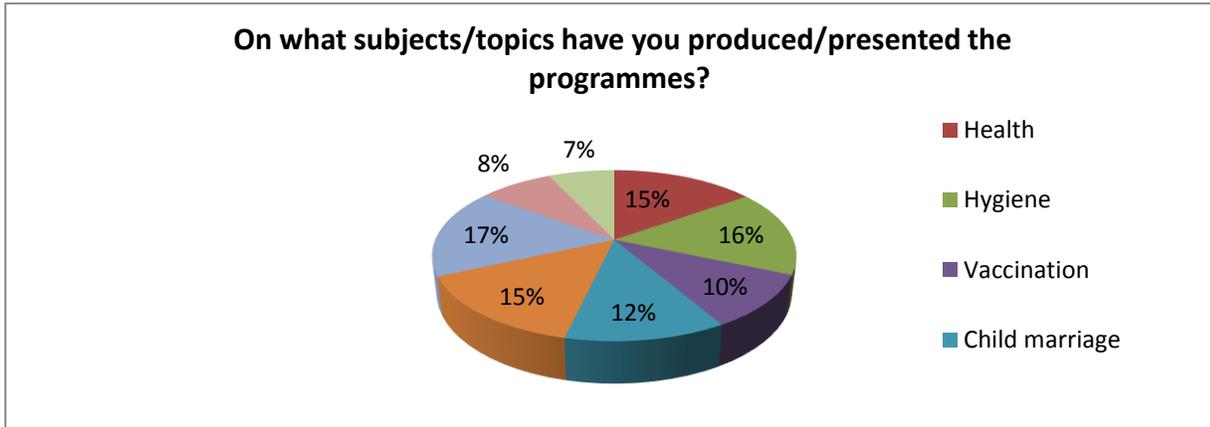


Figure 1.6 : Subjects/topics produced/presented the programmes.

Various kinds of programmes have been covered by these volunteers including health, hygiene, vaccination, child marriage, community development, girl education, agriculture and entrepreneurship. The fig.1.6 reveals that girl education is the most discussed topic with 17% of them saying that they have presented programmes based on the same. However, it was closely followed by hygiene, health and community development. Considering that the difference in the numbers isn't very much, it will be safe to say that almost all of these topics are being given enough importance.

8.3 Socio-economic profile

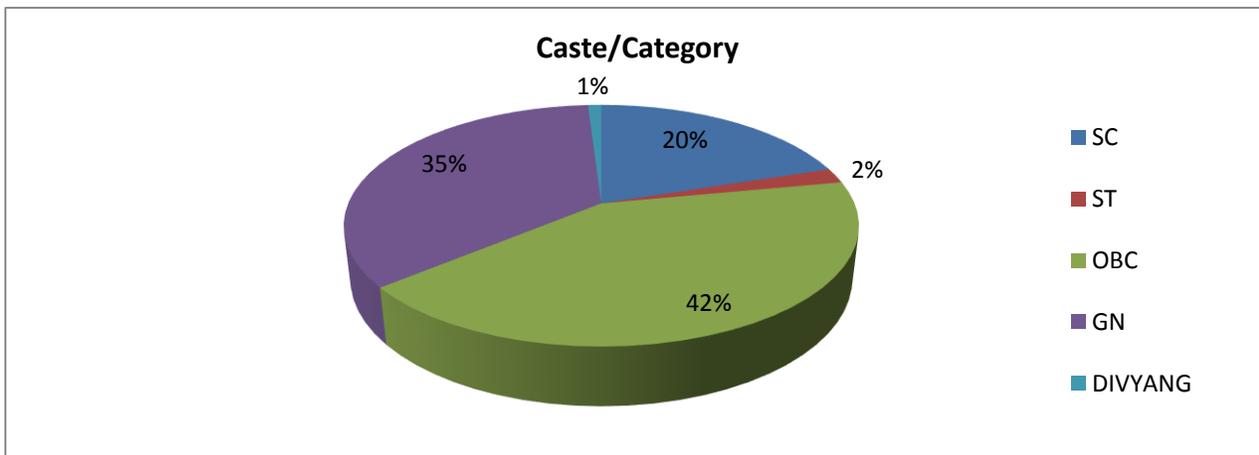


Figure 1.7 : Caste and Category of volunteers

Talking about caste and category, 42% belonged to the OBC category, 35% to the General category, 20% to the SC, 2% to the ST and 1% included Divyang category.

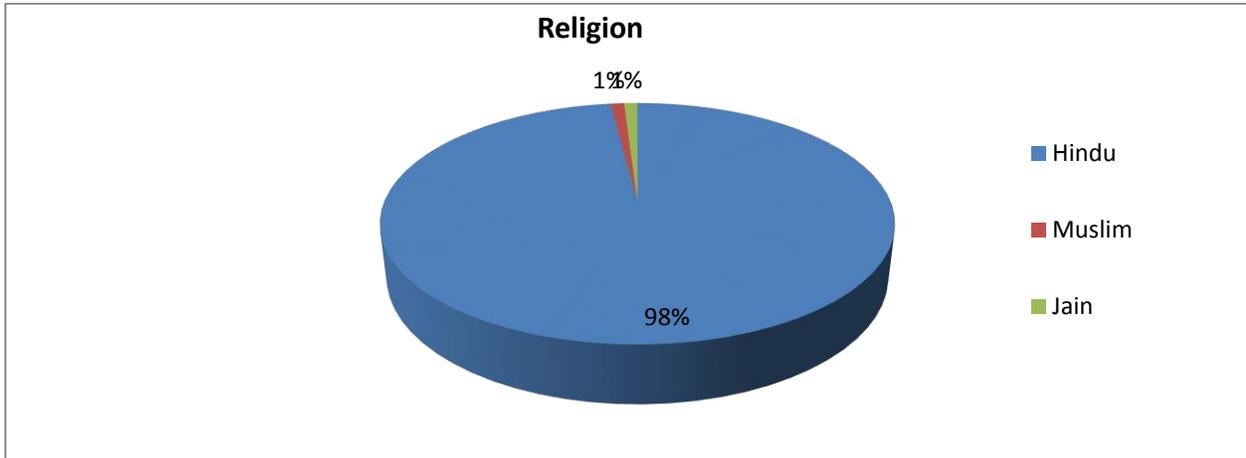


Figure 1.8 : Religion of volunteers

Although there are slight differences in number, no caste and category seems to be completely dominant over all others. However, coming to religion, 98% of the volunteers were Hindu while out of remaining 2%, 1% were Muslim and 1% Jain. The survey was done in Hindu dominant areas so it would have been expected that the participation of Hindu people would be more. However, the vast difference in numbers may be questionable.

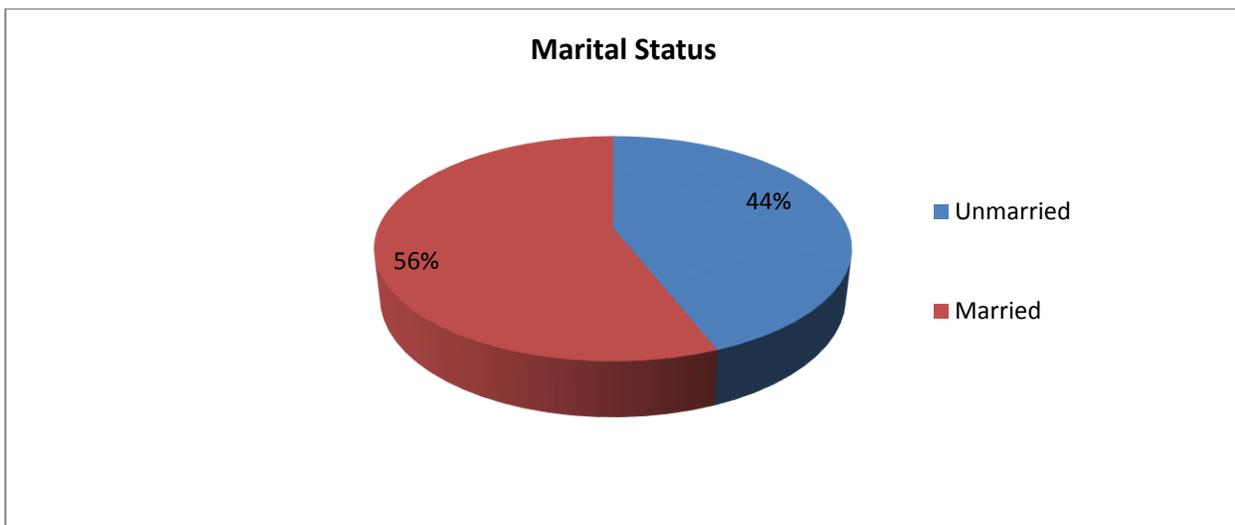


Figure 1.9 : Marital Status of volunteers

When asked about their marital status, 56% of the respondents said that they were married while the rest 44% were unmarried.

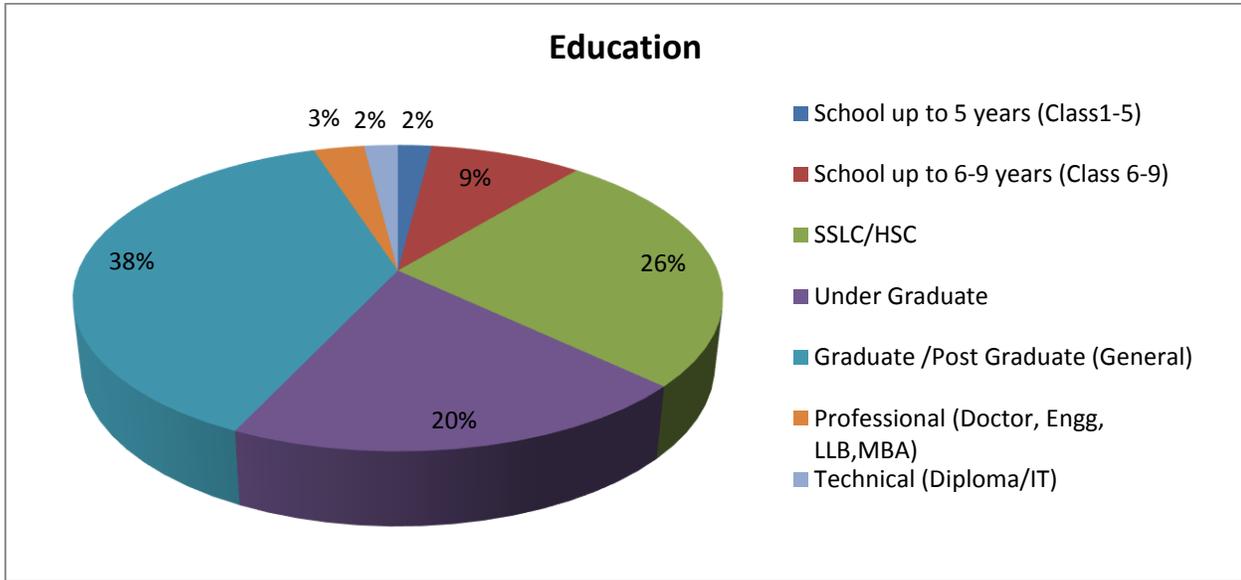


Figure 1.10: Educational status of volunteers

Further, the researcher asked the respondents about their educational qualification. There was quite diversity in this answer. Out of 100, 3 were professionals (Doctor, Engg, LLB, MBA), 38 were graduates or post graduates, 20 were undergraduates, 2 have technical degrees (Diploma/IT), 26 have completed SSLC/HSC, 9 went to school till class 6-9 while the rest 2 have studied only till 5.

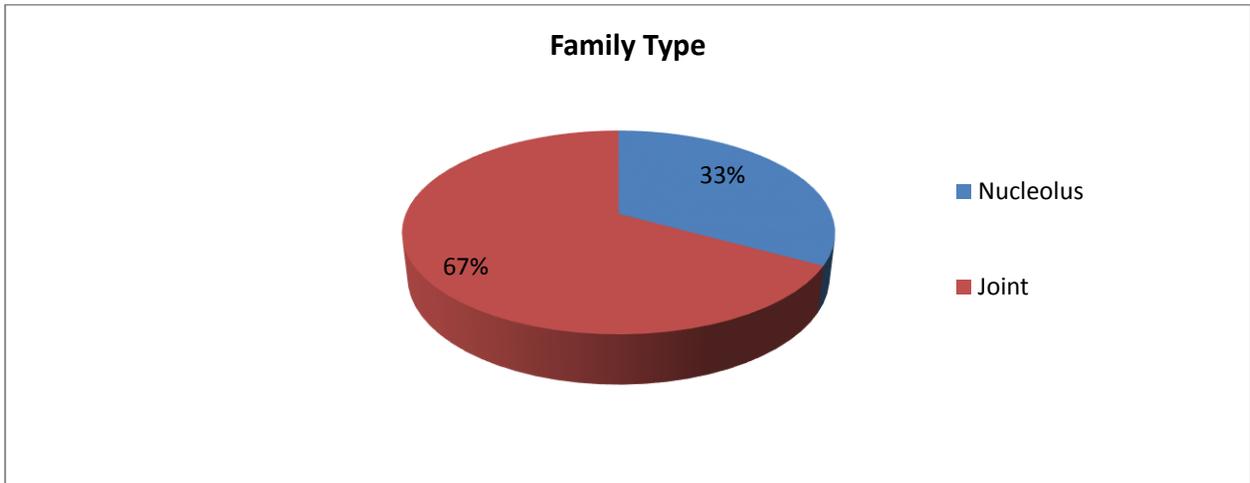


Figure 1.12: Family Type of volunteers

Digging a bit more into their background, the researcher asked them about their families. It was found that 67% of the people lived in a joint family while 33% lived in a nuclear one.

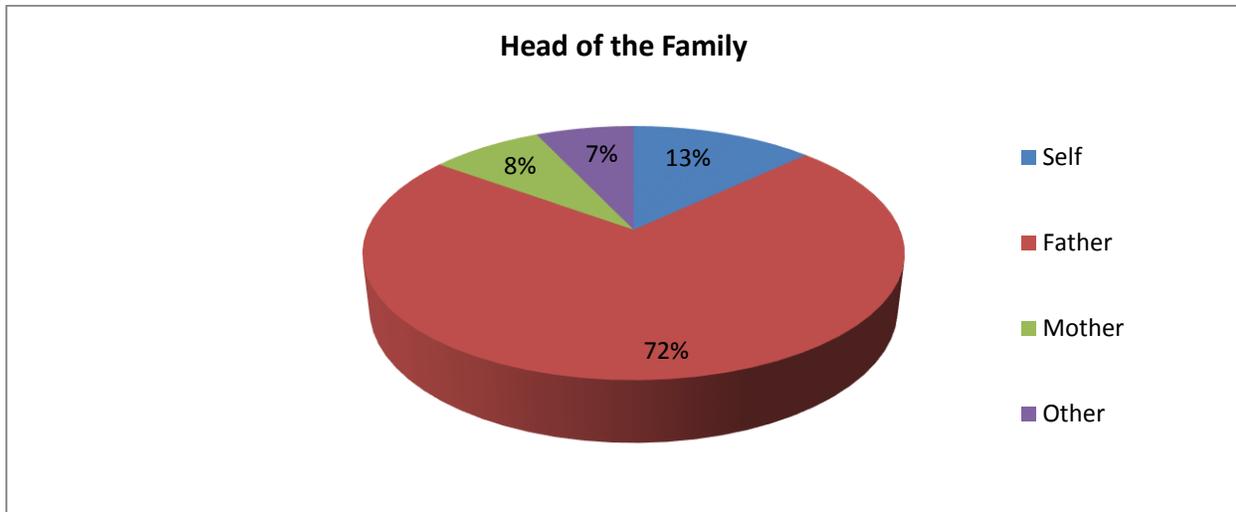


Figure 1.13 : Head of the Family of volunteers

Out of these total 100 families, 72% were headed by the father of the volunteers, 8% were headed by the mother, 7% by any other family member while 13% were themselves the head.

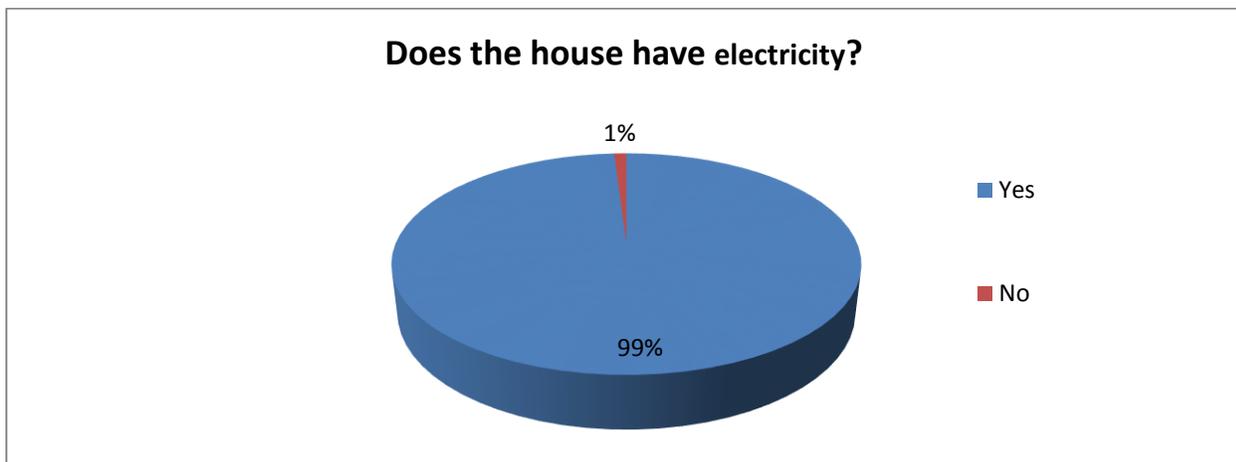


Figure 1.14: The facility of Electricity

Now, to get an idea of the development in their areas, the researcher asked a few questions in that regard. On being asked about the electricity, 99% said that they have access to electricity in their house.

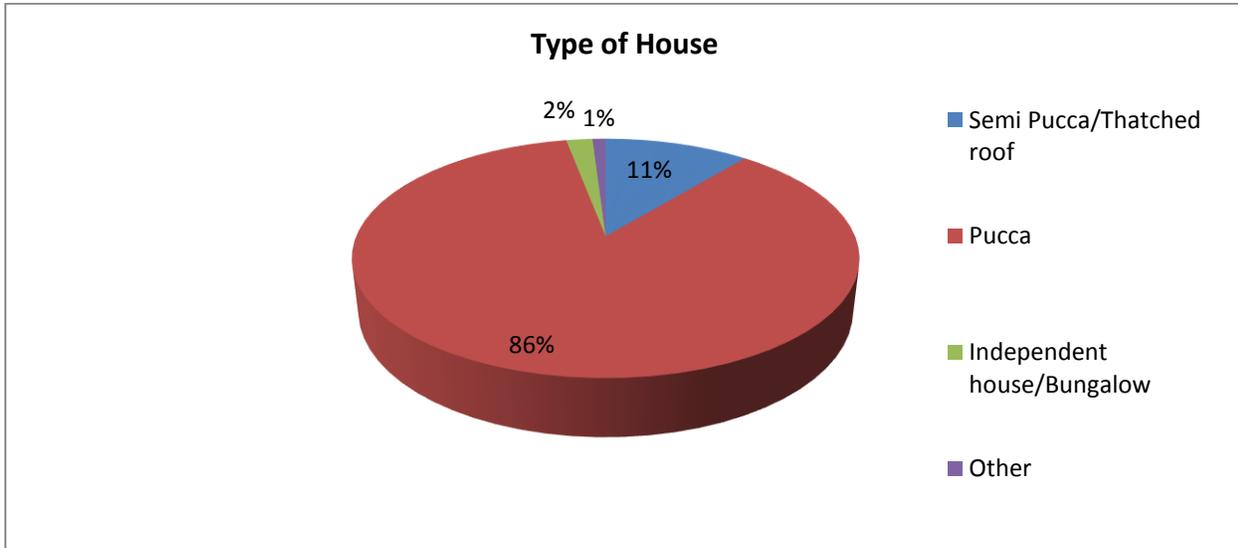


Figure 1.15: Type of House of volunteers

A majority of 86% lived in a pucca house, while 11% lived in a semi-pucca house, 2% lived in an independent house or bungalow and 1% in others.

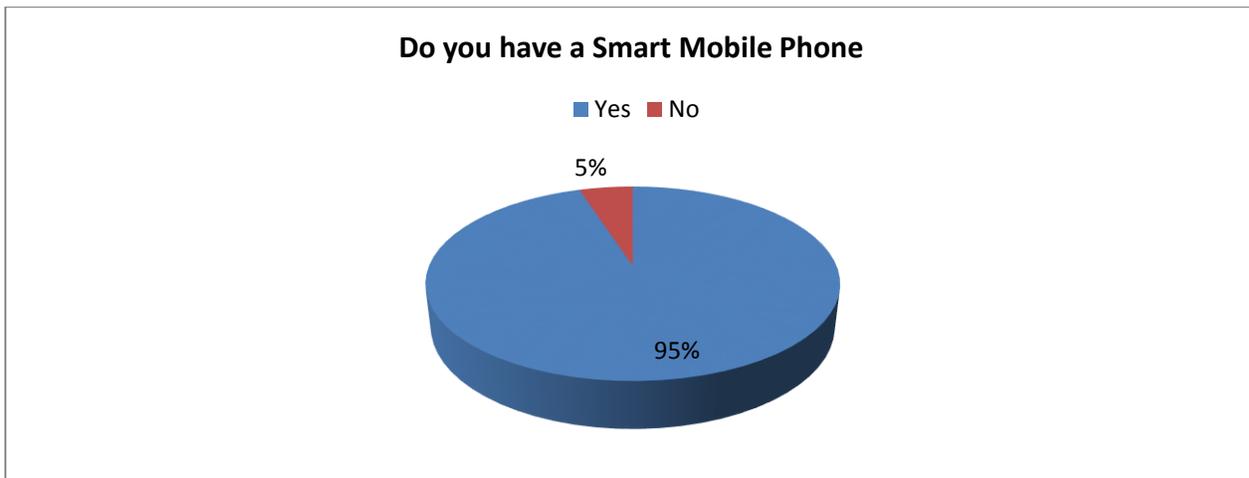


Figure 1.16 : Smart Mobile Phone ratio of CRS Volunteers

On being asked about mobile phones, 95% of these volunteers owned a personal mobile phone.

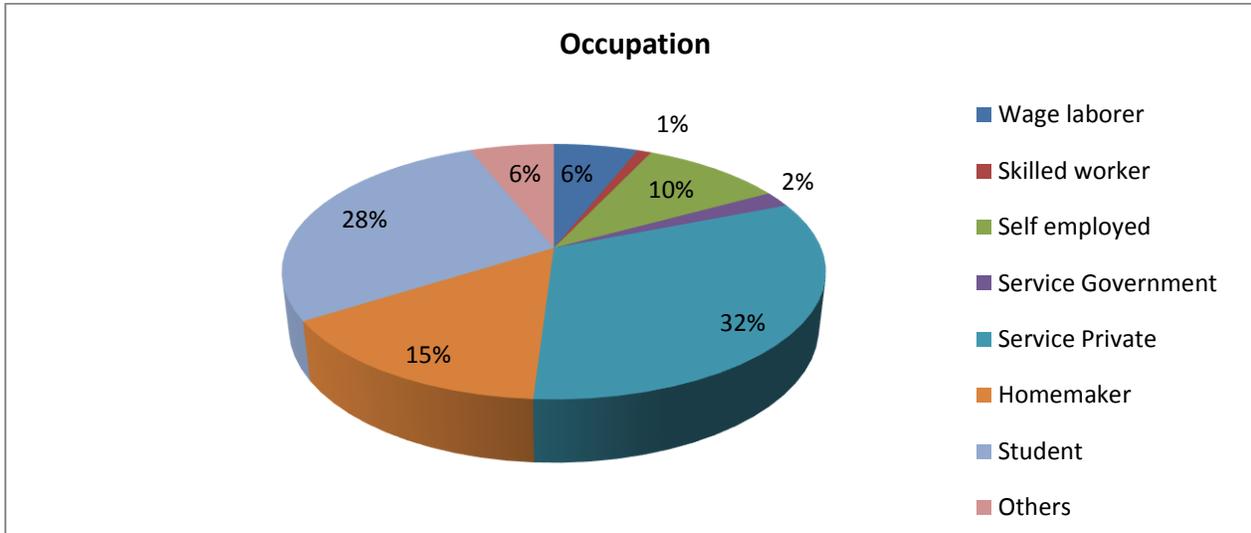


Figure 1.17 : Occupation of volunteers

Now again, there was quite diversity in the answers when the volunteers were asked about their occupation. 32% of the participants worked in private sectors, 28% were students, 15% were homemakers, 10% were self-employed, 6% were wage labourers, 2% were in government services, 1% worked as a skilled worker and remaining 6% were in other professions.

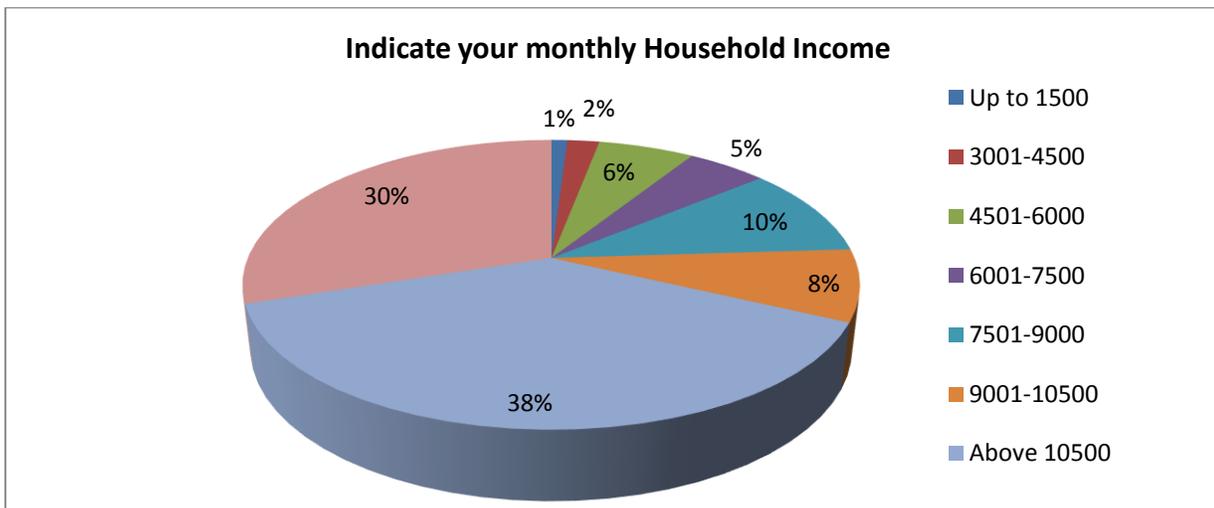


Figure 1.18 : Monthly Household Income of CRS Volunteers

Looking into the economical status of our volunteers, there was yet again a good variance in the responses. Talking of majority, 38% of the participants had their monthly household income above INR 10,500, followed by 30% of the participants who chose not to disclose it. 10% of the volunteers said that they monthly income was between INR 7,501-9,000, 8% said it was between INR 9,001-10,500, 6% said it was between INR 4,501-6,000, 5% said it was between INR 6,001-7,500, 2% said it to be between INR 3,001-4,500 while 1% said to be below INR 1,500. Although a good number of volunteers

may have enough monthly household income, it won't be wrong to say that there are ones who have it difficult.

9. Results and Discussion:

The results drawn from the study are being discussed in this section. The findings of the study suggests the volunteers of all age groups are involved in the production of programmes but youth volunteers of 15-25 years are more active than the volunteers of other age groups. It also suggests that youth volunteers more inclined and excited towards working with the CR. This shows that the youth is interested in running the community media, which is a good thing for obvious reasons. With respect to gender, it suggests that there is an equal opportunity for both men and women though some stations like Radio Banasthali have more women volunteers than men volunteers but overall consideration strikes a balance in this proportion. Hence, it won't be wrong to say that both men and women have been actively participating in running a CR. Although, this cannot be generalized for all the CRS in India, considering that there are various places in India where women are facing extreme inequality.

The participatory trends imply, a good majority of volunteers have longer association with the CRS. Based on this, it won't be wrong to say that the volunteers who join the stations feel its importance and wants to stay connected with it. As per the data collected from the survey, around 50% of the volunteers participate in the radio programmes on a regular basis including daily, weekly and fortnightly. Longer association of volunteers ensures the sustainability of the CRS. The volunteers have been conducting various different kinds of programmes. These programmes concern the topic of general education and awareness like health, hygiene, vaccination, child marriage, community development, girl education, agriculture and entrepreneurship. Almost equal importance is being given to all the topics. A community radio is supposed to give equal opportunities to everyone in the community with no bias on the basis of caste, religion, sex, etc.

In terms of caste and category, the backward communities are also being given a chance to get involved in the functioning of CR. It doesn't seem like there's much discrimination in that regard. However, when it comes to religion, the situation was entirely different. Out of 100 participants, 98 were Hindu while out of the remaining 2, one was a Jain and the other one was a Muslim. This difference in numbers seems to be very concerning. However, the fact that the study was conducted in Hindu dominant areas cannot be neglected.

Regarding the marital status, there was enough representation from both married and unmarried people. When it came to education, the responses were in a wide range. There were volunteers with professional qualifications like doctors and engineers and there were also volunteers who hardly attended the school. The fact that the educational qualification doesn't stand as a barrier in the inclusion of people as volunteers, comes as a great relief. 99 out of 100 participants had an Aadhar Card which, in a way, means that these volunteers are a bit aware of their rights and responsibilities. People from both joint families and nuclear families come up for the volunteering purpose, which is again a good thing. On the development front, the researcher found that 99% people have access to electricity in their houses while

88% people live in an independent house or a pucca house. A majority of 95% of the people owned a personal mobile. This is not enough to determine the overall development but based on these responses, it won't be wrong to say that these volunteers do have the basic facilities to support them. Today the smart mobile phone has also been considered as one of the basic need of the person. As per the survey, the volunteers belonged to various different professions. Some of them were wage laborers, some were in private or government sectors, and some were students, and so on. Coming to the financial and economical status, the responses were not quite satisfactory. While 30% of participants chose not to disclose their monthly household income, only 38% out of the rest told that the income was above INR 10,500. There were also people whose monthly family income was significantly low.

10. Conclusion:

After observing and analyzing all the data and information, it will be fair to say that the community radio works the way it should be. This is in regard to the fact that there is considerable participation by the members of the community in running the station. Moreover, people from all ages, castes, category and sex are being given an opportunity to get involved with the CR. Various topics are taken up for the shows and programmes while taking care that all the themes are in the interest of the community members like health, hygiene, girl education, and so on. Although running a radio requires people to be a little trained and professional, no barrier has been put for the community members to work and learn as a volunteer. No educational qualification or anything is kept as criteria for joining the CR. If we talk about the socio-economic background of the volunteers, most of them have basic facilities but they belong to marginalized section of the community, at least, an average lifestyle. However, financial condition doesn't seem to be too good for all.

In suggestion, the researcher would like to add that a bit more funding or revenue should be allowed to these radio stations. This would allow them to pay a better amount to the volunteers who are putting their time and efforts. It would help them to overcome the financial issues which may give them more time to invest in the radio station.

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