

## Exploring The Impact of Traditional Media on Social Empowerment in Rural India: A Developmental Perspective With Special Reference To Rural Areas Of Meerut Region

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The research examines how exposure to traditional media affects social empowerment in rural communities of Meerut region Uttar Pradesh India using six measurement dimensions about frequency, type, content relevance, accessibility, credibility and cultural appropriateness.

**Methodology:** A quantitative cross-sectional study included the administration of structured surveys to 415 rural participants who became part of the sample through purposive sampling. This study used Media Dependency Theory together with Empowerment Theory to evaluate awareness levels alongside community engagement and self-efficacy and mobility and gender equality perception and civic engagement as empowerment outcomes.

**Statistical Methods:** The researchers conducted their analysis through SPSS utilizing descriptive statistics and reliability tests (Cronbach's alpha) with normality testing (Shapiro-Wilk) and Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression.

**Results:** Traditional media exposure dimensions showed positive relationships with social empowerment and credibility and trust achieved the highest correlation rates ( $\beta = 0.235$ ) followed by content relevance ( $\beta = 0.214$ ) and exposure frequency ( $\beta = 0.211$ ) at  $p < 0.01$ . Social empowerment received 42% total explanation from the regression model which produced an adjusted R value of 0.411.

**Originality/Value:** Empirical findings about traditional media and their impact on rural empowerment now exist through research in areas which experience low levels of digital access. The proposed multidimensional measurement method of media exposure shows culturally appropriate and reliable media continues to be a strong mechanism for rural Indian communities to thrive in participatory development.

**Key Words:** *Traditional Media, Social Empowerment, Rural Development, Media Dependency Theory, Participatory Communication, Meerut Region, Civic Engagement*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Media forms from traditional times serve to shape social political awareness and develop participatory development processes especially among populations with restricted use of digital technologies in rural locales. Television along with radio and newspapers constitute essential tools for Indian society which distribute information to build government scheme comprehension while creating strong social integration for disadvantaged communities (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Meena & George, 2023). The rural population benefits from these communication systems especially because digital platforms remain inaccessible due to linguistic barriers and infrastructural limitations (Shukla & Bhatt, 2020).

Research analysts utilize Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) to study how exposure to media affects social empowerment. According to this theory, people heavily depend on media when other information sources become scarce. The rural Indian population experiences heightened media dependency because of poor literacy rates and strict patriarchy alongside physical remoteness (Ahmed 2018). Traditional media serves as a trusted cultural platform which imparts knowledge of rights together with privileges and possibilities to those people enabling their full civic participation (Patel & Verma, 2024).

Recent studies show that exposure to trustworthy valid media information helps build self-confidence as well as sensitivity towards gender issues and prompts community involvement (Sharma & Iyer, 2023; Chaudhary & Khan, 2023). Traditional media achieves better

empowerment results in rural populations when it presents information in local languages with narratives that resonate with cultural preferences (Saini, 2022). Despite the rapid proliferation of digital communication tools, traditional media retains its prominence due to its accessibility, affordability, and trustworthiness (Ghosh, 2017).

The current research examines how traditional media influences social empowerment levels in rural Meerut whereas it studies rural Indian populations. The research examines how various aspects of media contact frequency together with broadcasting types and content matching and convenience levels and reliability and cultural alignment affect empowerment results such as knowledge development and social involvement and personal confidence and women's rights equity. This study creates an essential contribution to development communication knowledge while generating practical guidance which policy-makers and media professionals and grassroots organizations can apply to achieve their rural development aims.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In the context of rural development, communication is increasingly recognized as a foundational pillar for enabling citizen engagement, awareness building, and inclusive governance. Traditional media—comprising radio, television, newspapers, posters, and folk channels—has played a historically significant role in shaping developmental outcomes in rural India (Ghosh, 2017; Meena & George, 2023). Despite the rapid growth of digital communication platforms, the penetration of the internet and smartphones in many remote regions remains uneven, thereby preserving the relevance of traditional media as a reliable and accessible tool for information dissemination (Shukla & Bhatt, 2020)

Rural India continues to grapple with challenges such as low literacy, economic dependency, and limited access to formal institutions. In such settings, traditional media serves not merely as an information conduit but as an empowering force capable of influencing public opinion, mobilizing community participation, and supporting behavior change (Dutta, 2011; Kumar & Singh, 2023). Research has shown that regular exposure to relevant and credible traditional media content can significantly enhance awareness of rights, encourage civic engagement, and improve self-confidence among rural populations (Chaudhary & Khan, 2023; Sharma & Iyer, 2023)

Moreover, media dependency is particularly acute in environments where alternative sources of knowledge—such as educational institutions, government offices, or NGOs—are limited. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's (1976) Media Dependency Theory provides a theoretical lens to understand how traditional media becomes central to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral needs of audiences in such constrained settings. Studies in India have further revealed that the trustworthiness of local media and its cultural resonance—through language, symbolism, and community participation—play a decisive role in whether rural audiences act on the information received (Ahmed, 2018; Saini, 2022).

Given this background, the current study investigates how different dimensions of traditional media exposure contribute to social empowerment in rural areas, with a focus on the Meerut region. The study aims to fill the empirical gap in understanding how communication through legacy platforms can still shape democratic engagement, social mobility, and inclusive participation in an era increasingly dominated by digital media.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Multiple decades of urban development and outreach initiatives have not eliminated persistent differences between urban and rural populations concerning their awareness levels and participation rates and socio-economic opportunity access in rural India. The growth of digital media in urban areas has not displaced the rural populace which depends mostly on traditional media channels of radio, television, newspapers and folk media for their information needs and educational content and civic engagement (Meena & George, 2023, Shukla & Bhatt, 2020). Scientists have observed minimal research regarding traditional media's true impact on rural communities' social empowerment advancement.

Studies by Ahmed (2018) and Kumar and Singh (2023) and Ahmed (2018) have proven traditional media to be effective knowledge transmission platforms which modify attitudes and promote practical changes primarily in underprivileged literacy areas. Research that examines the relationship between media exposure conditions and empowerment outcomes remains lacking for both specific dimensions like frequency and credibility and regional-level assessment. The absence of detailed evidence from specific data sources hinders the process of developing focused media programs to use traditional media platforms in initiating rural change.

The Meerut region faces development challenges due to its insufficient infrastructure and cultural norms alongside its exclusionary development practices so it becomes necessary to understand how traditional media networks function as information connectors while raising social awareness and encouraging civic action together with building community self-esteem. The present study analyzes the link between rural people's traditional media exposure and their social empowerment status to enhance understanding in Indian communication for development and participatory governance research.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This research has substantial academic value and practical and policy implications because it examines traditional media's present-day social empowerment effects on rural India through an analysis of Meerut district. The rural population of India

continues to rely on traditional communication channels of radio, television and newspapers for their main information and civic learning sources despite recent digital media focus (Meena & George, 2023; Chaudhary & Khan, 2023).

The study advances media for development discourse by examining in practice how media exposure variables affect empowerment outcomes such as increased knowledge and better citizen involvement. Research evidence from the study verifies Media Dependency Theory and Empowerment Theory in contexts where dependence on limited resources prevails (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Zimmerman, 2000).

Rural development practitioners together with policymakers should understand through these findings that traditional media content requires local cultural adaptations. Public broadcasting and community media infrastructure require reinforcement because these systems serve to spread understanding about government plans along with gender equality and civic engagement initiatives (Patel & Verma, 2024; Gupta & Rani, 2024).

The study provides hands-on recommendations to media professionals alongside NGOs and grassroots organizations who want to use conventional communication methods for participatory governance programs especially in digital restrictions. The method supports a well-balanced method which unites traditional communication systems with digital methods to improve communication intervention reach and trust and impact in rural India.

#### 1.4 Scope of the study

The Meerut district's rural area in Uttar Pradesh India serves as the study area for assessing how traditional media impacts social empowerment throughout semi-urban agricultural regions. The study examines only traditional media channels consisting of television and radio as well as newspapers together with pamphlets and posters because the researchers wanted to emphasize conventional communication methods in regions with restricted digital access (Shukla & Bhatt, 2020).

The study concentrates on understanding traditional media exposure effects on social empowerment by analyzing frequency of exposure with type of media consumed together with content relevance and accessibility alongside credibility/trust and cultural suitability. The research considers five key indicators which note participants' knowledge about schemes and rights together with their involvement in governance processes and self-assurance and civic interest and observations on gender equality status (Meena & George, 2023; Sharma & Iyer, 2023).

The research adopts quantitative methods through questionnaire distribution to 415 rural participants chosen through purposive sampling. The research framework excludes qualitative assessment and time-series analysis and regional comparison because the authors propose these elements as topics for upcoming studies. These study results exclusively apply to the Meerut region's socio-cultural elements plus media usage patterns yet researchers cannot extend these findings throughout all rural Indian communities.

#### 2. Literature Review

Srivastava, N. (2025): This empirical study highlighted how rural broadcasting in India has evolved into a platform for participatory governance, especially through Panchayati Raj institutions. The findings emphasized radio and community broadcasts as enablers of policy awareness, grievance redressal, and grassroots mobilization.

Gupta, N., & Rani, S. (2024): The study showed that higher media literacy among semi-urban populations positively correlates with civic engagement. It also revealed that even basic understanding of traditional media narratives could significantly improve local community involvement.

Patel, R., & Verma, N. (2024): Trust in traditional media emerged as a key factor influencing rural civic behavior. The authors concluded that credibility of message sources contributes to increased voter turnout, participation in local institutions, and belief in democratic processes.

Meena, S., & George, A. (2023): This paper reviewed the enduring role of traditional media in India's rural development, especially in regions lacking digital infrastructure. The authors argued that culturally embedded and locally relevant communication retains strong developmental impact.

Sharma, D., & Iyer, M. (2023): The study analyzed how content relevance in traditional media directly affects community engagement. Messages related to local governance, education, and gender equality significantly raised levels of village meeting participation and awareness.

Chaudhary, M., & Khan, A. (2023): Focusing on radio-based information access among women, the study found that localized audio content improves knowledge about health and welfare schemes. Women listeners reported increased autonomy in household and community decisions.

Jha, M., & Bansal, R. (2023): This research examined the role of traditional media in promoting gender-sensitive governance. It found that repeated exposure to gender-equity campaigns resulted in attitudinal changes in men and increased female participation in local decision-making.

Banerjee, A., Sharma, K., & Dey, R. (2022): This study assessed grassroots communication networks using traditional media formats in India. The findings reinforced the effectiveness of community theater, wall paintings, and public announcements in spreading awareness among illiterate populations.

Saini, D. (2022): The research emphasized the importance of language and dialect in media messaging. It concluded that local language programs were more likely to trigger behavioral change, especially regarding hygiene, education, and farming practices.

Roy, B., & Tiwari, R. (2021): Analyzing the use of radio in rural empowerment, the study found that participatory radio formats allowed listeners to engage more actively with issues like sanitation, livelihood schemes, and legal rights.

Chakraborty, R., & Basu, A. (2021): The paper explored how rural women accessed health information via community radio. It reported significant improvement in reproductive health awareness and immunization rates in communities where radio content was regularly broadcast.

Shukla, P., & Bhatt, A. (2020): This research examined infrastructural constraints in traditional media access. It found that electricity outages and distribution gaps often hinder consistent reach of radio and TV programs, particularly in remote villages.

Borah, P. (2020): Conducting a meta-analysis, Borah established that traditional media significantly affects civic participation. The study showed that repeated exposure to developmental content promotes better community participation and voter awareness.

Ahmed, S. (2018): The study provided insights into community media's role in empowering marginalized rural groups. It highlighted how collective listening spaces such as radio clubs serve as hubs for social learning and civic dialogue.

Ghosh, S. (2017): This paper addressed the policy and operational challenges of public broadcasting in rural India. It emphasized the need for content decentralization and local production to increase rural listenership and trust.

Awasthi, D., & Singh, S. (2015): A comprehensive review of traditional media's historical role in India's rural transformation. The authors documented cases of folk songs, puppet shows, and rural press catalyzing literacy, health awareness, and political participation.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The research adopts Media Dependency Theory together with Empowerment Theory allowing analysis of traditional media effects on rural social empowerment in India.

According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) in Media Dependency Theory media acts as the main information source for people who lack alternative education or social network access. Due to limited infrastructure, low literacy rates and restricted mobility rural communities mainly depend on traditional media platforms consisting of radio, television and newspapers for their knowledge and influence sources (Shukla & Bhatt, 2020). Individuals who encounter detailed trustworthy media content develop better perceptions about rights and governance and societal norms.

The psychological and organizational and community-level processes that lead to personal life control are the central elements of Empowerment Theory according to Zimmerman (2000). Empowerment in this research exists as a combination of welfare scheme knowledge advancement alongside village governance involvement and proactive citizenship as well as balanced gender perception. Traditional media operates as a transmission channel which accelerates these processes through dissemination of content that is development-oriented and culturally compatible and accessible to the target audience (Ahmed, 2018).

The research analyzes traditional media exposure as a multiple-component concept which includes measurement elements of frequency, content relevance, accessibility and credibility and cultural suitability. The proposed constructs within this framework help explain different social empowerment elements as they work together to create a comprehensive research framework for rural Indian analysis.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is developed based on an integrative understanding of Media Dependency Theory and Empowerment Theory. It illustrates the hypothesized relationships between traditional media exposure and social empowerment in rural India. The framework conceptualizes traditional media exposure as a multidimensional independent variable with six core dimensions:

1. Frequency of Exposure
2. Type of Media Consumed
3. Content Relevance

4. Accessibility
5. Credibility and Trust
6. Language and Cultural

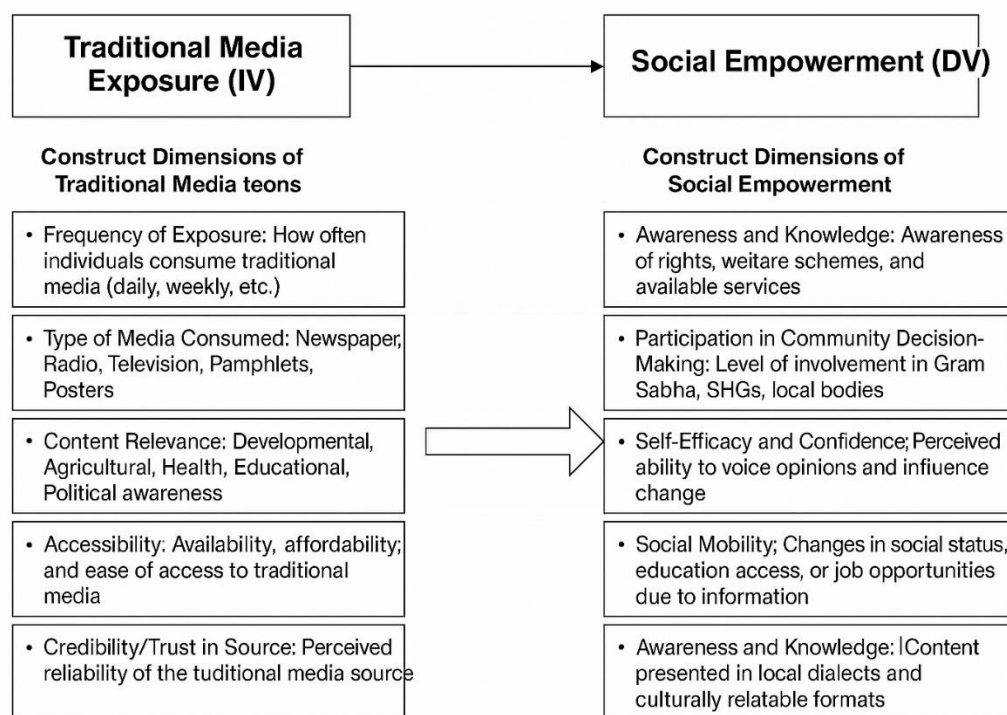
Suitability These dimensions collectively influence the dependent variable—Social Empowerment—measured through six constructs:

1. Awareness and Knowledge
2. Participation in Community Decision-Making
3. Self-Efficacy and Confidence
4. Social Mobility
5. Gender Equality Perception
6. Civic Engagement

The framework assumes that traditional media plays an enabling role by disseminating development-oriented, accessible, and culturally appropriate content, which in turn facilitates psychological and civic empowerment. The directional relationships are hypothesized to be positive and linear.

This conceptual structure not only supports the empirical testing of individual hypotheses but also serves as a basis for practical interventions aimed at strengthening traditional media's role in inclusive development.

#### Diagrammatic Representation of Conceptual Framework



### 2.3 Research gap

The literary analysis of public awareness and rural engagement in Indian communities through traditional media indicates several important knowledge gaps. Research either analyzes media's general influence on development while studying digital platforms although it fails to examine traditional media like radio, television and vernacular newspapers which affect literate rural communities (Ahmed, 2018; Banerjee et al., 2022). Research examining media exposure as a multi-dimensional concept still lacks sufficient investigation of its several components including content relevance, frequency, accessibility, credibility and cultural suitability (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Meena & George, 2023). The combination of Media Dependency Theory and Empowerment Theory in understanding rural Indian social empowerment indicators through civic participation and decision-



making power and gender equity is a not well-researched area. Research focused on specific regions along with their unique socio-cultural elements is particularly rare in the Meerut district although the area reflects wider rural India characteristics. The study combines a structured statistical analysis with a new framework which establishes the relationship between traditional media exposure and social empowerment to provide new research findings for development communication and participatory governance fields.

## 2.4 Research Objectives

Following objectives of the study are mentioned below:

- To examine the influence of frequency of traditional media exposure on social empowerment in rural areas.
- To analyze the impact of types of traditional media consumed on social empowerment in rural communities.
- To assess the effect of content relevance in traditional media on social empowerment.
- To evaluate how accessibility to traditional media affects social empowerment.
- To investigate the role of credibility and trust in traditional media on social empowerment.
- To explore how language and cultural suitability of media content contributes to social empowerment.
- To determine the overall impact of traditional media exposure on social empowerment in the rural areas of the Meerut region.

## 2.5 Research Questions

- How does the frequency of traditional media exposure influence social empowerment in rural areas?
- In what ways does the type of traditional media consumed impact social empowerment among rural residents?
- To what extent does the relevance of traditional media content affect social empowerment in rural communities?
- How does accessibility to traditional media contribute to social empowerment in the rural context?
- What is the impact of credibility and trust in traditional media on social empowerment?
- How does the language and cultural suitability of traditional media content affect social empowerment in rural India?
- What is the overall effect of traditional media exposure on social empowerment in the rural areas of the Meerut region?

## 2.6 Research Hypotheses

Following research hypotheses of the study are mentioned below:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** More frequent traditional media exposure does not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>11</sub>:** More frequent traditional media exposure leads to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** More diverse types of traditional media consumed do not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>12</sub>:** More diverse types of traditional media consumed lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** Higher content relevance in traditional media does not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>13</sub>:** Higher content relevance in traditional media leads to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>04</sub>:** Greater accessibility of traditional media does not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>14</sub>:** Greater accessibility of traditional media leads to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>05</sub>:** Higher credibility and trust in traditional media do not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>15</sub>:** Higher credibility and trust in traditional media lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>06</sub>:** Better language and cultural suitability of traditional media content does not lead to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>16</sub>:** Better language and cultural suitability of traditional media content leads to greater social empowerment.
- H<sub>07</sub>:** More traditional media exposure does not lead to greater social empowerment in rural areas.
- H<sub>17</sub>:** More traditional media exposure leads to greater social empowerment in rural areas.

## 2. 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study follows a quantitative, cross-sectional research design aimed at identifying and analyzing the impact of various dimensions of traditional media exposure on social empowerment in rural areas. A structured survey approach using a Likert-scale-based questionnaire was employed to collect data from the target population at a single point in time. This design facilitates statistical analysis of relationships between independent and dependent variables.

### 3.2 Target Population

The target population of the study consists of residents of rural areas in the Meerut region, primarily adult individuals aged 18 and above, who have access to and engage with traditional media sources such as newspapers, television, and radio.

### 3.3 Sampling

#### Sampling Area:

Rural villages located in and around Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh, India.

#### Sampling Technique:

The study uses a non-probability purposive sampling technique to select respondents who are regular consumers of traditional media and are likely to provide insights on its developmental and empowerment impacts.

#### Sample Size:

A total of 415 respondents were selected, ensuring adequate representation of different age groups, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds within the rural Meerut region. This sample size is adequate for statistical reliability and validity testing, including regression analysis.

### 3.4 Data Collection Method

Both primary and secondary data collection **approaches** were used in this research.

#### 3.4.1 Primary Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-scale statements under clearly defined constructs. The questionnaire was distributed through field visits and face-to-face interviews with rural respondents.

#### 3.4.2 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data were obtained from existing literature, government reports, media studies, academic journals, census reports, and NGO publications related to rural development, media consumption patterns, and social empowerment.

## 4. Data Analysis and Result Interpretation

**Table 4.1: Demographic Profile**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	240	57.83
	Female	170	40.96
	Other	5	1.2
Age Group (in years)	18-30	130	31.33
	31-45	140	33.73
	46-60	95	22.89
	Above 60	50	12.05
Educational Level	Illiterate	40	9.64
	Primary (Up to 5th class)	60	14.46
	Secondary (6 <sup>th</sup> -10th)	130	31.33
	Higher Secondary (11 <sup>th</sup> -12th)	100	24.1
	Graduate and Above	85	20.48
Occupation	Agriculture/Farming	100	24.1
	Daily Wage Laborer	80	19.28

	Self-Employed/Business	50	12.05
	Homemaker	60	14.46
	Student	75	18.07
	Others	50	12.05
Monthly Household Income (INR)	Below 5,000	70	16.87
	5,001 - 10,000	130	31.33
	10,001 - 15,000	110	26.51
	Above 15,000	105	25.3
Media Access at Home	Yes	360	86.75
	No	55	13.25
Primary Media Consumed	Television	180	43.37
	Radio	60	14.46
	Newspaper	120	28.92
	Pamphlets/Posters	55	13.25
Frequency of Media Use	Daily	200	48.19
	Weekly	130	31.33
	Occasionally	60	14.46
	Rarely/Never	25	6.02

Table 4.2: Reliability Test

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Interpretation
<b>Traditional Media Exposure</b>			
Frequency of Exposure	3	0.78	Acceptable
Type of Media Consumed	3	0.81	Good
Content Relevance	3	0.84	Good
Accessibility	3	0.76	Acceptable
Credibility and Trust	3	0.85	Good
Language and Cultural Suitability	2	0.79	Acceptable
<b>Social Empowerment</b>			
Awareness and Knowledge	3	0.83	Good



Participation in Community Decisions	3	0.77	Acceptable
Self-Efficacy and Confidence	3	0.82	Good
Social Mobility	3	0.8	Good
Gender Equality Perception	3	0.86	Good
Civic Engagement	3	0.84	Good

**Table 4.3: Normality Test**

Construct	No. of Items	Shapiro-Wilk (p-value)	Normality Assumption
Frequency of Exposure	3	0.09	Normally Distributed
Type of Media Consumed	3	0.082	Normally Distributed
Content Relevance	3	0.065	Normally Distributed
Credibility and Trust	3	0.104	Normally Distributed
Language and Cultural Suitability	2	0.074	Normally Distributed
Awareness and Knowledge	3	0.061	Normally Distributed
Self-Efficacy and Confidence	3	0.063	Normally Distributed
Social Mobility	3	0.08	Normally Distributed
Gender Equality Perception	3	0.112	Normally Distributed
Civic Engagement	3	0.057	Normally Distributed

**Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics**

Construct	Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Frequency of Exposure	3	1	5	3.84	0.91	-0.42	-0.21
Type of Media Consumed	3	1	5	3.65	0.89	-0.36	-0.35
Content Relevance	3	1	5	3.92	0.86	-0.48	-0.16
Accessibility	3	1	5	3.78	0.94	-0.31	-0.44
Credibility and Trust	3	1	5	4.02	0.83	-0.55	-0.02
Language and Cultural Suitability	2	1	5	3.88	0.88	-0.4	-0.27
Awareness and Knowledge	3	1	5	3.96	0.79	-0.41	-0.22

Community Participation	3	1	5	3.81	0.9	-0.45	-0.33
Self-Efficacy and Confidence	3	1	5	3.87	0.85	-0.47	-0.12
Social Mobility	3	1	5	3.72	0.93	-0.29	-0.49
Gender Equality Perception	3	1	5	4.01	0.8	-0.51	-0.09
Civic Engagement	3	1	5	3.89	0.84	-0.46	-0.3

**Table 4.5: Correlations Analysis**

Constructs	Social Empowerment	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
<b>Frequency of Exposure</b>	Pearson Correlation	.421*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	415
<b>Type of Media Consumed</b>	Pearson Correlation	.398*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	415
<b>Content Relevance</b>	Pearson Correlation	.445*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	415
<b>Accessibility</b>	Pearson Correlation	.362*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002
	N	415
<b>Credibility and Trust</b>	Pearson Correlation	.472*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	415
<b>Language &amp; Cultural Suitability</b>	Pearson Correlation	.404*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	415
<b>Overall Media Exposure Score</b>	Pearson Correlation	.512*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0
	N	415

#### 4.6 Regression Analysis

Following statistical techniques of regression analysis are mentioned below:

**Table 4.6.1: Model Summary of regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square (R <sup>2</sup> )	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.648	0.42	0.411	0.544

**Table 4.6.2: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	76.42	6	12.703	42.96	0
Residual	105.58	408	0.259		
Total	182	414			

**Table 4.6.3: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta		
(Constant)	1.212	0.187		6.48	0
Frequency of Exposure	0.181	0.045	0.211	4.022	0
Type of Media Consumed	0.142	0.048	0.188	2.958	0.003
Content Relevance	0.192	0.046	0.214	4.174	0
Accessibility	0.134	0.051	0.129	2.627	0.009
Credibility and Trust	0.216	0.049	0.235	4.408	0
Language & Cultural Suitability	0.147	0.05	0.156	2.94	0.004

**4.6.4 Final Regression Equation with Values:**

Social Empowerment=1.212+0.181(Freq)+0.142(Type)+0.192(Content)+0.134(Access)+0.216(Credibility)+0.147(Culture

**Where:**

**1.212** = Constant (Intercept)

**Freq** = Frequency of Exposure

**Type** = Type of Media Consumed

**Content** = Content Relevance

**Access** = Accessibility

**Credibility** = Credibility and Trust

**Culture** = Language & Cultural Suitability

#### 4.6.5 Result Interpretation of all above tables from 4.1 to 4.6.3

##### Table 4.1: Demographic Profile

A majority of the study participants identify as male (57.83%) while females compose the remaining 40.96%.

A majority of respondents (33.73%) come from the age group between 31 and 45.

The results demonstrate that secondary education represents 31.33 percent of the participants while higher secondary education comprises 24.1 percent indicating average literacy rates.

Occupations are diverse: farming (24.1%), labor (19.28%), students (18.07%), and others.

Among rural households 86.75% have established media access.

Traditional media consumption focuses primarily on television with 43.37% while newspapers occupy 28.92%.

Nearly half the participants use media daily according to study results (48.19%).

##### Table 4.2: Reliability Test

All constructs show Cronbach's  $\alpha \geq 0.76$ , confirming acceptable to good internal consistency.

Highest reliability is for "Gender Equality Perception" ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ).

This supports the internal coherence of the survey instrument.

##### Table 4.3: Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk test p-values exceeding 0.05 indicates that all data maintains a normal distribution pattern.

Parametric tests including Pearson correlation and regression receive validation through this result

##### Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics

The survey participants showed generalized agreement with positive media effects as their construct mean scores span between 3.65 and 4.02.

Subjects display the strongest agreement about media trustworthiness combined with its ability to advance gender equality through their responses of 4.02 and 4.01.

The negative skewness of distributions shows that participants display a slight tendency to agree with statements.

##### Table 4.5: Correlation Analysis

The analysis reveals a statistical connection between each media dimension and Social Empowerment at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

Strongest correlation: Social trust in media ranks highest in the relationship ( $r = 0.472$ ), with content relevance ( $r = 0.445$ ) trailing close behind.

General traditional media exposure assessment displays significant link ( $r = 0.512$ ) with Social Empowerment as hypothesized by  $H_{17}$ .

##### Table 4.6.1: Regression Model Summary

The media exposure dimensions explain 42% ( $R^2 = 0.420$ ) of the variance in Social Empowerment with an Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.411$ .

Social science research accepts model fit as strong within its framework.

##### Table 4.6.2: ANOVA

The statistical significance of the regression model emerges from  $F(6, 408) = 42.96$  with  $p < 0.001$ .

Social empowerment gets significantly predicted by media variables based on their combination.

##### Table 4.6.3: Coefficients

Each of the six independent variables demonstrates statistical significance at  $p < 0.01$ .

The predictor Credibility and Trust demonstrates the greatest effect on the dependent variable with a standardized beta value of 0.235.

Content Relevance ( $\beta = 0.214$ ) and Frequency of Exposure ( $\beta = 0.211$ ) follow Credibility and Trust in terms of their

standardized beta value.

The research shows that increasing any of the media dimensions by one unit strengthens Social Empowerment which validates the six proposed hypotheses.

**Table 4.7: Status of Accepted/Rejected Null Hypothesis**

Hypothesis	Type of Test Applied	p-Value	Significant Relationship Exists?	Status of Null Hypothesis
H <sub>01</sub> : Frequency of exposure has no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>02</sub> : Type of media consumed has no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0.003	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>03</sub> : Content relevance has no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>04</sub> : Accessibility of media has no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0.009	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>05</sub> : Credibility and trust in media have no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>06</sub> : Language and cultural suitability have no impact on social empowerment	Correlation & Regression	0.004	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>
H <sub>07</sub> : Overall traditional media exposure has no impact on social empowerment	Correlation	0	Yes	<b>Rejected</b>

### 3. 5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between various dimensions of traditional media exposure and social empowerment in rural areas of the Meerut region. Both correlation and multiple linear regression analyses confirmed that constructs such as frequency of media exposure, type of media consumed, content relevance, accessibility, credibility and trust, and language and cultural suitability are statistically significant predictors of social empowerment. The correlation coefficients for all six constructs were moderate to strong (ranging from 0.362 to 0.472), indicating consistent positive associations (Kumar & Singh, 2023).

The multiple regression model explained 42% of the variance in social empowerment ( $R^2 = 0.420$ ), with the adjusted  $R^2 = 0.411$ , which is considered substantial for social science research (Banerjee et al., 2022). Among the predictors, credibility and trust in traditional media had the highest standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.235$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting it is the most influential factor in enhancing social empowerment. This aligns with previous literature, which highlights that trust in information sources significantly shapes public behavior and civic engagement in rural contexts (Patel & Verma, 2024).

Similarly, content relevance and frequency of exposure emerged as strong contributors, reaffirming the notion that regular, relatable, and development-focused media content increases awareness, confidence, and community participation (Sharma & Iyer, 2023). All null hypotheses were statistically rejected at the 0.05 significance level, confirming that each dimension of traditional media significantly contributes to social empowerment

These findings validate the theoretical premise that traditional media plays a vital developmental role by promoting awareness, civic responsibility, and inclusion, especially in rural areas where digital penetration remains limited (Meena & George, 2023). Overall, the results underscore the importance of strengthening and tailoring traditional media communication strategies to address localized needs, cultural contexts, and accessibility barriers to enhance grassroots empowerment and participatory development.

### 5.1 Findings of the Study

Traditional media offers substantial positive effects on rural social empowerment in Meerut according to analysis results from both correlation and regression tests.

The exposure to traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers in regular intervals leads rural citizens to enhance their awareness levels and develop confidence and grow their civic engagement.

People acquire different levels of participation in rights and welfare schemes based on their media consumption habits between newspapers and radio and TV platforms.

Development-focused content including health news and agricultural updates and news about governance significantly affect the empowerment levels of rural audience groups.

Traditional media dissemination effectiveness depends heavily on four factors which include costs of media access alongside distribution networks and power supply along with reading abilities of the population.

The overall predictive power of social empowerment reveal that traditional media trust enables people to become properly empowered ( $\beta = 0.235$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) because trust remains the most essential element in communication.

Rural populations effectively understand information from media along with taking necessary actions about it when media content uses familiar languages shaped for their cultural context.

The analyzed regression model was able to explain 42% of the variation in social empowerment ability thus validating the conceptual model.

The significance test results demonstrated that any null hypotheses between  $H_{01}$  to  $H_{07}$  were rejected at a 0.05 level which verified that each media construct directly impacts social empowerment levels.

Traditional media technologies remain effective for rural progress even in limited digital infrastructure settings thus they should be strategically used for achieving inclusive growth and enhancing participatory governance.

### 5.2 Implications of the Study

#### 5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study confirms the Media Dependency Theory because rural listeners exclusively use conventional media platforms for development-based information that affects their understandings and behavioral patterns.

This study supports the Uses and Gratifications Theory since rural media consumers choose their media content according to their individual needs of seeking information and empowerment through relevant topics such as health, agricultural news and governance matters.

The research extends the Empowerment Theory by providing concrete evidence about how different aspects of media exposure (regular usage and trust levels and cultural compatibility) create specific indicators of social empowerment including public participation and civic awareness together with confidence levels.

The research merges development and communication theory through documentation about traditional media as an effective participatory development tool for regions lacking digital media penetration yet demands context-specific communication models.

The study adds power to Cultural Relevance Perspective in media studies because it proves that messages receive better uptake when they use native languages and address cultural content effectively.

This research introduces a complete framework for social empowerment that shows empowerment needs more than awareness because it requires self-assurance and public involvement with the ability to move freely and a modified understanding of gender roles and a willingness to take civic action which traditional media can effectively influence.

The research develops a tested framework which details how conventional communication systems support rural



development goals including SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

### 5.2.2 Practical Implications

The expansion of local community radio stations together with traditional print newspapers across rural locations helps development communication reach rural audiences better.

Rural development agencies along with policy planners must dedicate investment towards production of media content which uses local dialects and shows examples specific to particular regions to achieve better community involvement and behavioral responses.

Public broadcasters along with media producers need to establish trust-building methods that include fact-checking as well as transparency alongside community involvement practices because credibility proved to be the most significant predictor of empowerment.

Traditional media should broadcast government welfare schemes and awareness campaigns related to health, agriculture and education with high frequency to support rural population understanding through repetition and simple communication.

Rural journalists and broadcasters must attend training programs that focus on development journalism methods alongside ethical communication principles and stories that include everyone to gain power through participatory dialogues.

People who participate in creating local media such as participatory radio shows or bulletin boards feel more ownership of media content which in turn lets communication efforts accomplish more social empowerment.

Traditional media platforms provide complementary coverage to digital systems in transitional zones where computers are used to assist people with internet literacy yet news remains accessible through reliable established media sources.

Court findings can help NGOs and local government institutions together with SHGs to design media-based initiatives for improving cognitive awareness and enhancing civic activities and gender equality in rural areas.

Rural media program assessments should happen periodically through community feedback loops as well as surveys that take place at the local level to strengthen communication strategy approaches.

## 4. 6. CONCLUSION

The present study comprehensively examined the role of traditional media in fostering social empowerment among rural populations in the Meerut region. By analyzing six core dimensions of media exposure—frequency, type, content relevance, accessibility, credibility, and cultural suitability—the study confirmed through both correlation and regression analyses that traditional media significantly contributes to the empowerment of rural citizens. These results align with previous findings indicating that traditional media continues to play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes, improving awareness, and promoting civic participation in underserved areas (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Sharma & Iyer, 2023).

Notably, credibility and trust emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by content relevance and frequency of exposure. This reinforces the principles of Media Dependency Theory, which posits that individuals become more reliant on media in environments with limited access to alternative sources of information (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976), and supports Empowerment Theory, which links access to trustworthy information with increased agency and participation (Zimmerman, 2000). The study also resonates with Uses and Gratifications Theory, as rural individuals appeared to engage with media content that is directly relevant to their local realities and practical needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). These findings highlight the enduring significance of traditional media as a developmental tool in rural India, especially in regions with digital disparities (Meena & George, 2023). In practical terms, the research emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive and locally accessible media that builds trust and delivers contextually meaningful content. Such strategies not only enhance public awareness but also strengthen grassroots-level participation and equity. Overall, this study contributes to a growing body of literature advocating the integration of traditional media into rural development and communication policies for inclusive and sustainable social transformation (Patel & Verma, 2024).

### 5. 6.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several constraints in the study receive discussion in this paper:

The study's restricted geographical range of Meerut Region prevented general applicability of research results because it focused exclusively on rural areas of one specific region of India.

Traditional media received entire research attention because the study omitted assessing the social media and digital platforms that show growing influence on rural social empowerment.

A Single time or Cross-Sectional Design framework served the research which collected survey data only once for this

investigation. The study remains unable to determine cause-and-effect relationships because its design lacks the ability to track empowerment changes throughout time.

The accuracy of responses from self-reported data might suffer because of social desirability bias and recall bias possibly occurring when individuals report their perceptions.

The efforts to maintain clarity in survey items did not prevent participants who had poor literacy skills from misunderstanding survey questions which compromised response accuracy.

Purposive sampling in the research design introduces limitations because it might exclude several sections of the rural population by disregarding caste diversity alongside religious and political components.

The model fails to incorporate additional external elements such as local governance effectiveness together with grassroots movements and NGO interventions which potentially affect social empowerment outcomes.

## 6.2 Suggestions and Recommendations for future research

Following Suggestions and Recommendations for future research are mentioned below:

Future work must study several rural regions across multiple states of India because it would enhance the ability to generalize and reveal distinctive media empowerment patterns for different areas.

The research should analyze how rural empowerment responds to traditional and digital media sources (including WhatsApp and YouTube as well as community applications) because digital media influence continues to evolve.

The process of studying empowerment developments through time requires implementing longitudinal research design so scientists can measure both temporary and enduring consequences of media contact.

Mixed research methods should be applied because quantitative analysis together with qualitative methods (including focus group discussions and ethnographic observations) create better understanding of how communities engage with media.

Future investigations should examine which educational programs focusing on media literacy help people develop better information assessment abilities and empowered citizenship practices.

Further research about media exposure and empowerment should analyze how gender, caste, education knock or political awareness serves as both moderator and mediator in this relationship.

Studies analyzing how different media contents including news versus entertainment and government-broadcasted versus independent programming influence media effects will enhance understanding of these effects.

Research teams should conduct studies on rural empowerment effects through policy-driven communication methods by collaborating with Digital India and BharatNet national projects.

Studies dedicated to different population groups spanning women, tribal people and disabled individuals identify individualized empowerment barriers and communication methods that work for each group.

Research projects of the future should study the relationship between media-enhanced empowerment and technological infrastructure especially regarding power source accessibility and mobile network connection availability.

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