



Information Need of Farming Community of Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Saharanpur District of Western Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This study has been done on the information needs of farming community of Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Saharanpur District of Western Uttar Pradesh. The paper focuses on information needs of farming community in the area of Agriculture, Health, Family Planning, Education and Nutrition. Findings reveal that majority of rural families had medium level of information needs in which agriculture was found to be the most needed area. However, health and nutrition were the second most needed area followed by education and family planning. Information need was positively and significantly related with all the independent variables except average age of the family.

Key Words: Information Need, Farming community, Agriculture, Health, Family Planning, Education and Nutrition

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INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture is at the crossroads of change towards its highest zenith. This change is the cofactor of information rather we can say is the outcome of the information needs of the rural families in general and the farmers in particular. The information needs of farm families are not uniform amongst all rural areas. The need varies according to the state of development of the concerned rural areas. Due the ever increasing population, food necessity is increasing but the cultivable land is decreasing in rural areas. Increased agricultural production is no more possible using the orthodox ways of farming keeping in view the ever-changing rather say ever deteriorating climatic condition both at the macro level as well as the micro level. Those rural areas which are closer to the urban sectors are having greater access to information and in turn have an increased hunger for information as compared to the families that are in remote rural areas.

Information need is an individuals or group's desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. The 'information' and 'need' in 'information need' are inseparable interconnection. Needs and interests call forth information. Information needs are related to, but distinct from information requirements. An example is that a need is hunger; the requirement is food. The concept of information needs was coined by an American information scientist Robert S. Taylor in his article "The Process of Asking Questions" published in American Documentation (Now is Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology).

Although we know the potential of rural sector we have not given due importance to rural information services. Now the time is ripe when we can no longer ignore the information needs of the rural people. Rural people are not only in need of the information regarding agriculture and animal husbandry but they are interested in all kind of information which helps them in their development. To bridge the gap between the elite and the poor, it is necessary to put emphasis on information need fulfilling development messages.

Devadason and Linga [1] have mentioned that identification of information needs is essential to the design of information systems in general and to the provision of effective information services in particular. But it has been found to be a difficult task as it is almost an investigative or detective work. In order to identify information needs one should adopt various methods to gather information on the

various factors that influence the information needs. Dutta [2] has reported that very less number of studies have been conducted on the information needs of rural dwellers of several developing countries.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the Morna, Purkaji Block in Muzaffarnagar district, Shamli and Thanabhawan block in Shamli District and Rampur and Deoband of Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Two Villages in each block were randomly selected. Fifteen respondents were selected from each of the selected villages through random sampling technique. Thus a total of 180 respondents were selected for the purpose of study. Head of the selected households were interviewed.

In this study, information need refers to the information related to all public service areas and national development sectors such as agriculture, health, nutrition, family planning, formal and non formal education needed by the rural families.

Data related to physical and mental characteristics of the farming community and information need was collected with the help of specially structured interview schedule. Data collected through interview schedule were verified and supported by the observation technique and informal interpersonal discussion with the villagers. To maintain uniformity in communication, the interview schedule was constructed in Hindi. Later on, the collected information was translated into English for reporting purposes. The data collected was analysed by applying simple statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and correlation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Physical and Mental Characteristics

Majority of the respondents were of middle age and middle socio-economic status (70.55 and 48.50% respectively). Maximum numbers of respondents (78.89 %) were from O.B.C category having large size family (70.56 %). Joint family system appeared to be prevalent in 80.56 per cent of farming community. Maximum numbers of respondents (57.78%) were small farmers belonging to middle income group 67.78%.

Information Needs

Information needs of the farming community related to different areas like agriculture, health, family planning, education and nutrition were studied. Findings of the study presented in Table 1 reveals that majority of respondents (65%) had medium level of information needs followed by high (23.33%) and low (11.67%) level of information needs.

Table 1: Information needs wise categorization of respondents N= 180

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Low ($< \bar{x} - SD$)	21	11.67
Medium ($\bar{x} \pm SD$)	117	65.00
High ($> \bar{x} + SD$)	42	23.33

Mean = 91.4, SD = 3.4

Area Wise Information Needs Of Rural Families

Table 2 reveals that agriculture was the most needed area among the respondents. About 98.88 per cent respondents were having agriculture information need. Health was the second most needed area constituting 95.56 per cent respondents. Respondents having education need were to the tune of 93.33 per cent. However, 68.33 per cent respondents revealed their needs related to family planning area. And respondent having nutrition need were to the tune of 40.56 per cent. Percentage of respondents having information need in the area of agriculture is more. It may be because respondents were from farming community having agriculture as their primary occupation. It seems from the data that after agriculture people were more concerned about health. Considerably a large number of respondents expressed their concern about information need related to education, family planning and nutrition. This finding is almost similar to the findings reported by Singh and Mishra [5].

Table 2: Area wise Information Needs of Rural Families N= 180

S. No.	Area of Need	Needed		Not needed	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Agriculture	178	98.88	2	2.22
2	Health	172	95.56	8	4.44
3	Family planning	123	68.33	57	31.66
4	Education	168	93.33	12	6.67
5	Nutrition	73	40.56	107	59.44

Information Needs of Rural Families in Different Areas

Information needs of the rural families were studied by semi-structured interview schedule and the results obtained have been discussed in the following pages. All the areas of the information can be classified into most needed, moderately needed and least needed categories. Criteria for classifying different information need into most needed, moderately needed and least needed categories are percentage of respondents. Areas of information which were needed by more than 75 per cent of respondents have been considered as most needed and areas which were needed by less than 75 per cent but more than 55 per cent of respondents have been considered as moderately needed and area which were needed by less than 55 per cent of respondent have been considered as least needed.

Agriculture Related Information Needs

Findings of the study indicate that under agriculture related information needs, improved seeds, novel scientific technologies and tools, land preparation, fertilizers, irrigation techniques and implements and crop diseases and control measures were most needed areas of information. Areas like type of soils and their suitability to different crops, pesticides and their application, caring of cattle, weed control, storage of food grains, market prices of crops, improving yield, agricultural implements, interculture, bio-fertilizers, fisheries, poultry, look after of the crops, low cost good quality seeds, harvesting of crops, horticultural crops, medicinal plants, seasonal vegetables, improved varieties of sugarcane, floriculture, seasonal crops were moderately needed areas of information. However, there was no such area in the agriculture information need which was least needed by the rural families. In the study conducted by Singh and Mishra [5] there were many least needed areas but in the present study respondents reported different types of agriculture information either in most needed or in moderately needed categories. It is important to mention here that Singh and Mishra [5] considered areas of information which were needed by more than 30 per cent of respondents as the most needed area of information. If findings of the present study are analysed according to their criteria, all the sub areas of information will fall under the most needed area of information. This change may be due to change in the time duration and media exposure as well as change in the locale of the study.

Health Related Information Needs

The findings of the study reveals that under health related information needs, contagious diseases (symptoms and cure), infant diseases and infant health, Environmental cleanliness and healthy skin were most needed areas of information. However, rest others areas such as exercise, good health for different age groups, contaminated water, drug addiction, yoga, immunization, health of pregnant women, polio, heart diseases, contaminated food (effects and prevention), different types of diseases, bronchitis and bronchopneumonia, malaria, food items avoided and preferred, disease prevention methods, rabies, liver diseases, snake bite (cure), medicines, importance of plants on health, health of lactating mother, jaundice, rickets, tetanus, stones, blood pressure, digestion, first-aid, effects of spices, physiological knowledge, diabetes, cancer, cleanliness of body, mental health and modern scientific knowledge were the least needed areas of information. The results of the present study are partly in line with Singh [4] and Singh and Mishra [5].

Education Related Information Need

Findings of the study indicate that under education related information needs, employment news and information about different schools, colleges and universities and eligibility for entrance were the most needed areas. Areas like motivating films and programmes, maintaining discipline in children, educational programmes, news and films, adult education programmes, professional teaching, scientific researches and knowledge, information related to home making profession for boys and girls, way of diverting child into studies, technical education, training for self employment, computer education, selection of profession, international and national news, professional programmes for youth, new books, programmes for professional women, application forms for different institutes, institute serving handicapped children, medical institutes, army entrance and correspondence courses were the moderately needed areas of rural families.

Family Planning Related Information Need

The findings of the study reveals that under family planning needs, advantages and disadvantages of scientific methods, methods of family planning and their use, advantages and disadvantages of family planning, need for family planning and medicines without any side effect were the most needed areas of information. The moderately needed areas of family planning were interval periods among children, cheap methods of family planning, copper-T, advantages and disadvantages of Mala-D, condoms and tubectomy.

Nutrition Related Information Needs

The findings of the study indicates that under nutrition related information needs, the most needed areas were food preservation techniques, nutritious recipes, deficiency diseases and food for deficiency diseases and balanced diet. Rest others like, food nutrients, cooking practices, food for different diseases, importance of vegetables, infant food items, balanced food for different age groups, spices, balanced diet for poor families, diet for pregnant and lactating women, weaning food items, food adulteration, fever diet, ways of keeping food items fresh, food avoided and food preferred in different diseases, food out of waste food items, methods of increasing the nutrient content, food poisoning, liquid and solid foods, purchasing food items, preparation of cake and bread, importance of iodized salt, chips and papad making, nutritious drinks, soup making and water purification were moderately needed by the rural families.

CONCLUSION

On the whole it can be concluded that majority of farm-families (70.55%) had medium level of information needs in which agriculture was found to be the most needed area (98.88%). However, health was the second most needed area (95.56%) followed by education (93.33%) and family planning (68.33%) and nutrition (40.56%). The findings of the present study hold a great potential in the field of communication research as well as for planning and dissemination of need based information among farming community. Farming community have indicated their information needs in all the area of development. Media managers should design develop and disseminate information related to all the sector of farming community development.

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