



Information Need of Rural Women In Agriculture And Their Preference of Information Sources: A Case of Four Villages of Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Women have various information need on several aspects of agriculture since they are involved actively in farming operation like their male counter parts. Women of rural areas have to face several problems like lack of credible information source concerned with agriculture, lack of technical assistance in accessing and using information, lack of mobility, weak social contacts and many others. In rural areas Women are actively engaged in all kind of agricultural operations, they need assistance from Government, private or any other agency for latest information sources related to crops, livestock and others allied activities. To determine the agriculture information need and preferences of sources of agricultural information this study was designed. It was conducted in Hapur and Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh, India. A total of 120 rural women were selected through simple random sampling technique and interviewed through well-structured interview schedule. The data, thus collected, was analyzed by using appropriate computer software to draw conclusions. Study revealed that most of the respondents i.e. rural women (80.83%) reported to have high information need about insect management, followed by 75.00 percent of respondents having high information need regarding weather advisory. The results of the study revealed that family members, fellow farmers and radio were found to be important information sources and ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd respectively. Study also found that the electronic media, print media and female extension personnel were other important agricultural information sources.

Key Words: Rural women; Information need, Information sources

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INTRODUCTION

Information is very essential thing in order to remain productive resource in this ever changing competitive world. The information society is where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life [3]. The main objective of information society is to empower all the people through access to and use of information. Women's education and empowerment have been important social, economic, and political issues in the developing countries like India. Over the period of time we have made significant progress in dissemination information particularly in rural area. Rural women are now participating in decision making process starting from family issue to decision about agriculture, credit, health as well as various socio and economic issues of community. Women, irrespective of location, need information on family health, food and nutrition, family planning and child education, but rural women also need information regarding agriculture and animal husbandry for their involvement in socio-economic growth. However, the women who live in villages have lack of access to information resources and inability to have access to various Information and Communication Technologies. Rural women have remained as unexploited natural resources and whole nation would be benefited by empowering them and properly involving them in developmental activities. Information is an essential production factor in agriculture and rural development as well [1]. Local knowledge provides much of the ideas and momentum for agricultural and other changes. Information coming from outside the area can bring new ideas and innovation, awareness

of new opportunities. So it is clear that, for consistent growth in agricultural production, it is very much necessary to equipped rural female farmers as they need relevant and timely information to improve their production techniques and increase their income [5, 2, , 7-9].

Un-fortunately women face a number of constraints on freely accessing agricultural information and they have very limited sources of information. Since any extension system must target particular categories of clients to meet their needs, gender specific problems of the clients need gender specific solutions: women in agriculture need special help [6-9]. Earlier it was assume that information passed by extension personnel to male farmers of the community would be passed on to rural women but experience indicates that agricultural knowledge acquired by men, often does not trickle across effectively to women in the family. Men are less likely to pass information along to women when crops or tasks are gender-specific. According to the research study it has been proved that extension messages are effective only if they reach the client but un-fortunately these messages tend not to reach women farmers [6]. Rural Information centers can mitigate information needs of rural women through access to relevant information and can enable rural women of in India participating in the national economic development.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Random sampling technique has been adopted to select the respondents which were rural women. From the selected state *i.e.*, Uttar Pradesh two districts Hapur and Ghaziabad were selected randomly. From Hapur district of Uttar Pradesh, Lalpur and Shyampur village were selected randomly. Similarly Dohai and Samana villages from Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh were randomly selected as the locale of study. Thirty respondents were selected from each of the 4 selected villages of 2 districts by simple random sampling technique. Thus, a total of 120 respondents were randomly selected for the present study. The data were collected through survey method using structured interview schedules. For assessing agricultural information need of rural women, information sources they use, a proper interview schedule was developed. To assess the information need of respondents, they were asked to give responses on provided list of information according to their priority. Responses were collected on a 3-point continuum from high need to low need. A score of 3 was given to high need, 2 to medium need and 1 to low information need. In the same way to measure preference of agricultural information response were collected on a 3-point continuum from poor to good to very good. Preference of information sources were ranked using weighted rank and mean rank. The data regarding agricultural information need, information sources and rating of various information sources were analysed using mean and frequency statistics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio-personal profile of respondents:

Age:

It was revealed from the data in Table1 that a most of the respondents (47.50%) from both the districts belonged to middle age group, followed by young (37.50 %) and old age group (15.00%).

Sl. No.	Category	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Young	Below 33 years	45	37.50
2	Middle	33 to 47 years	57	47.50
3	Old	Above 47 years	18	15.00

Table1: Distribution of Respondents According to their Age(N=120)

Education

Education is one of the important factors, which determine mental and intellectual development of the rural women.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to their Education(N=120)

Sl. No.	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	12	10.00
2.	Functionally literate	23	19.17
3.	Primary school	26	21.70
4.	Secondary school	43	35.80
5.	Graduate	16	13.33

The data collected regarding educational level of the respondents are presented in Table 2. It was revealed that 35.80 per cent of respondents had education at secondary school level, followed by 21.70 per cent who had primary school education, 19.17 percent were functionally literate, 13.33 percent were graduate and only 10.00 percent respondents were illiterate.

Social Participation

As Table 3 indicates village organizations prevalent in the area were self-help group (SHGs), cooperative society, farmers' forum and rural youth club etc. A majority of the respondents (65.22%) were members of SHG's, followed by co-operative society (10.43%) and panchayat members (5.22%). About 8.70 per cent of the respondents were observed to be not member of any organization.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents According to their Social Participation (N=120)

Sl. No.	Social participation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gram Panchayat	6	05.22
2	Co-operative society	12	10.43
3	Farmers forum	8	06.96
4	Self-help group	75	65.22
5	Youth club	4	03.48
6	Not member to any group	10	08.70

Extension Contact

Extension agency contact is very crucial for the information seeking behaviour of the respondent's i.e. rural women. The data in Table 4 revealed that a majority of the respondents (50.83%) had contacted extension agency rarely and others (33.33%) had contacted sometimes (40%) and only 15.84 per cent had contacted extension agency frequently.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to their Extension Agency Contact (N=120)

Sl. No.	Extension agency contact	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Rarely	61	50.83
2.	Sometimes	40	33.33
3.	Frequently	19	15.84

Analysis of the data of Table 5 revealed that most of the women (80.83%) reported to have high information need about Insect Management, followed by 75.00percent of respondents having high information need regarding Weather Advisory. Information regarding Market Advisory was reported to be highly needed (73.33%), followed by 66.67percent reported to have high information need regarding disease management. Less than 1 percent rural women reported to have high information need regarding land Preparation, and only 1.66 percent reported to have high information need for sowing of the crop. About Fifty per cent of rural women reported to have high information need regarding harvesting and storage of the crop. Eighty five percent rural women reported to have medium information need regarding seed production of the crop, followed by 83.33 percent and 73.33percent medium information need about seed treatment and weed management. Only 1.66percent of respondents reported low information need about weather advisory followed by 2.5percent feel low information need about irrigation management. It was also reported that 65.83 percent of rural women did not feel high information need about land preparation.

Table 5: Information Need of Rural Women in Agriculture (N=120)

S. No.	Categories of Information	Low		Medium		High	
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
1.	Land Preparation	79	65.83	40	33.33	1	0.83
2.	Seed Treatment	15	12.5	100	83.33	5	4.16
3.	Sowing	10	8.33	108	90	2	1.66
4.	Irrigation Management	3	2.50	88	73.33	29	24.16
5.	Weed Management	08	6.67	96	80.00	16	13.33
6.	Insect management	4	3.33	19	15.83	97	80.83
7.	Disease Management	10	8.33	30	25.00	80	66.67
8.	Harvest & Storage	8	6.66	42	35	70	58.33
9.	Seed Production	16	13.33	102	85	2	1.66
10.	Weather Advisory	2	1.66	28	23.33	90	75.00
11.	Market Advisory	2	3.33	30	21.66	88	73.33

Respondents were asked about their existing information sources from which they get information related to various agricultural activities and the response are presented in Table 6. The data given in Table 6 show clearly that family, fellow farmers, television, radio, print media, extension field staff, private sector, NGO's, neighbors, and fellow farmers were the existing agricultural information sources for rural women. Majority of the respondents place their responses from poor to very good rating. Keeping in view the results given in Table 6 the weighted scores for all the information sources were calculated by multiplying the score value allotted to each category of scale with the frequency counts. The weighted scores computed in this way are presented in Table 7.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to their preference of existing agricultural information sources (N=120)

S.No.	Information sources	rating					
		Poor		Good		Very good	
		(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
1	Male extension personnel	81	67.50	34	28.33	5	4.17
2	Female extension agents	38	31.67	78	65.00	4	3.33
3	Private personnel	3	2.50	104	86.67	13	10.83
4	Print media	46	38.33	64	53.33	10	8.33
5	Electronic media	20	16.67	65	54.17	35	29.17
6	Radio	15	12.50	65	54.17	40	33.33
7	Neighbor/friends	65	54.17	35	29.17	20	16.67
8	Fellow farmer	15	12.50	30	25.00	70	58.33
9	Family member	20	16.67	25	20.83	75	62.50

As the Table 7 depicts that 62.50 percent of rural women rated family member very good for information on agriculture followed by fellow farmer (58.33%) and radio (33.33%). Private personnel were also found to have great influence as most of the respondents (86.67%) rated them as good source of agricultural information. Likewise radio and electronic media were also found as good information source of rural women as 33.33 percent respondents rated it very good and 54.17 percent respondents rated electronic media good. This may be due to the availability of these ICT tools in almost in every farm families in the study area. The above results are more or less similar to those of Onemolease [2], who concluded from a study in Nigeria that major agricultural source of information on improved farming practices for rural women in Nigeria was family/friends (89.17%) followed by radio (41.67%), television (10.0%), extension agent (8.33%) and newspapers (5.83%). Further Rajak [4] reported that nearly 15.0% of the women farmers of Trinidad received agricultural information from their spouse and only 0.4% from the extension workers. Female extension agents were found to be accepted very well among respondents as 65.00 respondents rated them good for agricultural information. This may be because of the socio cultural factor which discourage women to openly communicate with their male personnel. Respondents were found to be more comfortable with female extension personnel as compared to male extension personnel. This is also indicated by the very fact which data suggest only 28.33 percent women considered them good source of information concerned with agriculture and allied fields.

Table 7. Ranking of various information sources of respondents on the basis of information dissemination among them (N=120)

S.No.	Information sources	Weighted mean	Rank order
1	Male extension personnel	1.367	IX
2	Female extension agents	1.716	VI
3	Private personnel	2.083	V
4	Print media	1.700	VII
5	Electronic media	2.125	IV
6	Radio	2.208	III
7	Neighbor	1.625	VIII
8	Fellow farmer	2.375	II
9	Family member	2.458	I

Ranking of the various information sources used by rural women for agricultural information was carried out on the basis of computation of weighted mean. As Table 7 suggested family member (weighted mean 2.458) were found to be most preferred agricultural information source followed by fellow farmers (weighted mean 2.375) and radio (2.208). This is very obvious findings, because of the limited outreach of

the rural women they are dependent on family members and fellow friends for the all kinds of information. Others sources of agricultural information like electronic media, print media, local input dealer, female extension agent were given ranked 4th,5th, 6th,7th by the respondents respectively.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded from the study that among the agriculture information need of the rural women, information regarding credit, accessibility, market information, weather information, education were found to be of great importance. Among agriculture information sources, family member, fellow farmers, friends, electronic media, friends were found to be preferred largely by the rural women. It was also concluded that according to the preferences given by rural women for agricultural information source for them, Family member were found to be most preferred followed by fellow friend and radio. Female extension agents were also preferred very greatly by the rural women as they find themselves more open and comfortable with them. Electronic media, print media, and private personnel were also found to be important agricultural information sources preferred by rural women of study area. But still it has been observed that rural women have very limited access to outside information sources of their community. Government should launch specific training and educational programmes for rural women keeping in view their problems. Women specific programmes should be broadcast through television and radio. Awareness should be created among male members to educate the females' members of their family so that they receive agriculture information through print media.

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