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Study on Constraints in Seeking Information by the Rural Women and their Suggestions

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Information, Seeking, Communication media, Rural women.

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The study was conducted in Milkipur block of Faizabad district (U.P.) selected purposively. A total number of 100 respondents were selected through random sampling four sample villages on the basis of highest area under Agriculture of the respondents. The majority of the respondents 35.00% were found in medium categories (29-42) of age group, (80 %) literate, (41%) backward caste, (31%) nuclear family, (43%) size of family, (24%) small size of landholding, (22%), in services, (41%) Agriculture as their main occupation, (60%), pukka houses, (55%), no participation in any organization, (65%), annual income, was found in medium categories, respectively.

Introduction

The information needs; demands and wants have been used interchangeably, although they may not be identical. Information need involves a cognitive process which may operate on different levels of consciousness and, hence, may not be clear even to the inquirer him/her. People in different situations require information on a subject in different forms and with different emphasis and different depth of explanation. Even the same person seeks information in different ways and forms on various occasions depending on his/her knowledge of the subject and the reasons for wanting the information. So the information need is very difficult to define

and categorize. They are the recipients of an iniquitously small share of development opportunities. Their access to education, nutrition, health care, skill formation, jobs and decision making is very limited. Many customs cause them harassment. Wage discrimination and gender bias are both visible and widespread. Generally they are employed in low paid, low producing sectors, despite a lot of laws enacted for conceptualizing the equal status of women. After Independence many steps have been taken to improve the lot of women. Many laws have also been passed. A National Commission on Women was setup to act as a

watchdog on the matters concerning women in 1992. Many Programmes in the areas of education, health and employment have been initiated for development of women, rural as well as urban.

Information is the basic material for the decision making process. People need information, right from the organizational level to the personal level, from the highly educated and experience person to school children, from a very famous person to an ordinary person, for taking the right decision in every step of life. In this information age there is so much of information being generated that we are confronted with growth of information which leads to information explosion, exponential information pollution. Due to information explosion or information pollution, the people are confused about the information need, information access and information sources. Again information access varies from person to person according to their needs. Thus, information seeking is a kind of communication behavior, which surely be influenced by many factors. It also involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kind of information which sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is sought.

Information needs and information seeking pattern /behavior is a kind of communication behavior, which surely be influenced by many factors. Rural people are aware of their information needs. As a developing country, the features that characterized the rural population in India include illiteracy, poverty, hunger, disease, and general absence of basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, electricity, etc. These coupled with peculiar problems of rural population such as early marriages, lack of income, withdrawal of students from school has created indolence towards any form of developmental efforts. A recent UNESCO report revealed that the level of poverty in the country is increasing at an

alarming rate and the situation is worst in the Northern part, particularly the North East where Barak Valley is situated.

Women, form about half of the population of the country, but their situation has been grim. For centuries, they have been deliberately denied opportunities of growth in the name of religion and socio-cultural practices. Before independence, women were prey to many abhorrent customs, traditional rigidities and vices due to which their status in the society touched its nadir and their situation was all-round bleak. At the personal social plan, women were victims of widespread illiteracy.

Women's education and empowerment have been important social economic and political issues in the developing countries like Bangladesh and over the past three decades Bangladesh has made impressive gains in these areas. Women are now participating in family decision making as well as in national and international socio economic and political development.

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 information and communication technology. The rural women are remained as unexploited natural resources and the whole nation would be benefited if they are properly involved in the development activities in a planned Way (Agriculture Information services AIS 2004) library or information centers can irrigate information needs of rural women through access to relevant information and can enable rural women of Bangladesh participating in the national economic development.

Information is the basic material for the decision making process. People need information, right from the organizational level to the personal level, from the highly educated and experience person, for taking the right decision in every step of life. In this information age there is so much of information being generated that we are confronted with growth of information which leads to information explosion, exponential information pollution. Due to the information explosion or information pollution, the people are confused about the information need, information access and information sources. Again information access varies from person to person according to their needs. Thus, information seeking is a kind of communication behavior, which surely be influenced by many factors. It also involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kind of information which sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is sought.

According to Davidson and Lingam (1997), the understanding of information needs and information seeking behavior of various professional groups is essential as it helps in the planning, implementation and operation of information system and service in the given work setting. Information need is often understood information science as evolving from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning (Kuhlthau, 1993). Information need is described as an anomalous state of knowledge or a gap in individual's knowledge in sense making situations (Drevin and Nilan 1986).

Information seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular way of behavior. It is also an aspect of scholarly work most interesting to academic librarian who strives to develop collections, services, and organizational

structures that facilitate seeking of information. Information seeking behavior is a broad term which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seeking information, evaluate and select information and finally uses this information to satisfy her information needs varies factors may determine the information seeking behavior of an individual or a group of individuals. It is, therefore desirable to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates users skills in identifying the needed information, channels and sources preferred for acquiring information and barriers to information.

In agricultural knowledge and information system, people and institutions are linked together to promote and enable mutual learning and generate, share and use agriculture related technology, knowledge skills and information. The compatibility of the resources is another important factor which helps the process of adoption of house and agricultural innovations. The aspect is generally overlooked by most of the extension agent, and the genuine difficulties of the women due to their limited resources are generally taken as indicator of their apathy. Thus, it makes our extension agent somewhat biased in their approach this situation causes a setback to the effectiveness of the house and agricultural communication and consequently makes the task of the extension agent even more challenging and difficult.

Today, a number of communication media and channels are used for dissemination improved house and agricultural information and technology to the women. While, communicating information though media it is necessary to take into account the preference of the women for a particular information media. The women may come across a number of information sources

credibility is decided by the degree of trustworthiness accorded at a given time. We can depend upon, as a source of information, on information publications that are published by central and state government and other originations. Motion pictures, films, exhibitions, newspapers, home science books, success story of women, meetings, conferences, radio broadcast, TV. Telecast, research releases. From the home science research stations etc. are good sources of information. Some time the private industries inputs are also a good source of information for home sector.

There are many sources/ channel of information through which women seek information on house level and it is obvious that no one channel that is effective or best for all situations. What is needed is a parreled communication of channel in order to have the intended impact proper selection and use of channels is very important in order to reach a given audience and to achieve predetermined objective. It is also being noted that some women are exposed to a relatively large no. of information sources and with greater frequency than other. Information played an important role in our societies since the down of civilization. However, in recent years its increase in volume and accuracy as well as greater access, have significantly elevated its value in all aspects of social life. The world community has recognized the revolutionary nature of information society the world is undergoing an information communication technology revolution, a revolution that has enormous social economic implication for the developed and developing countries. Science and technology has undergone revolutionary changes in recent past. Only a few decades ago, all telecommunications services were delivered over copper wires. More recently, the world has witnessed the exponential growth of information and communication technology.

Today the dazzling collection of new technologies, services and applications has led to a digital age in which access has become a key component of people lives.

Information and communication technologies comprise a diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store and manage data and information. Traditional information tools e.g. T.V., Radio and telephone have already established their credibility and effectiveness in promoting the developmental schemes in rural and marginalized areas, the modern information and communication tool are computer, internet and wireless communication technology along with powerful software which can process and integrate sound , text and video in to electronic media. The information and communication technologies can create new opportunities to bridge the gap between information haves and information has not in the developing countries. It is very clear from the sources and channels of information used by the rural women, that there information seeking behavior are mainly informal. They align more to information gotten from friends, relatives, husband, sons, daughter and market women .this according to Mommmoh (2002), is because “those sources to them are more reliable and authentic” it can also be seen to be in conformation of Zipfs (1949) principles of least effort in human behavior. The rural woman hardly seeks information in a formal way through formal sources or channels .watching TV. Or listening to radio where available is seen as luxury only man cans effort.

Information seeking behavior is one of the important key concepts of user’s study which covers various facets like information, need, use, access pattern, behavior in different environment, etc. Crombie (1997) in his convocation address Avnashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for

Women stated that the inequalities faced by women arise from attitudes, perceptions and prejudices that are difficult to change. The information needs; demands and wants have been used interchangeably, although they may not be identical.

Information need involves a cognitive process which may operate on different levels of consciousness and, hence, may not be clear even to the inquirer her. People in different situations require information on a subject in different forms and with different emphasis and different depth of explanation. Even the same person seeks information in different ways and forms on various occasions depending on her knowledge of the subject and the reasons for wanting the information. So the information need is very difficult to define and categorize.

In traditional society, women were supposed to do housework, take care of children, and give the family emotional stability. However, with the social and economic changes that affect our urban and rural society, the traditional values also change. More women are engaged in full-time jobs. No longer are they only women and mothers; they are also business women, politicians, and contributors to society. Rural women, who in most cases do not have full time jobs, have also exposed themselves on various fields of financial acquisitions including commerce, service and agriculture. These require them to know how to perform these economic activities in order for them to get more return on their effort. They need to know the way to grow vegetables, how to produce a marketable product and how to advertise the services provided. For instance, a group of women have run a traditional cake production in Nigeria Sembilan (Ministry of Agriculture & Agro-Based Industry, n.d.). Women staying at home also can run business through application of information technology through marketing and advertisement.

Since 1991, the government of Malaysia has included in its five-year development plans, a dedicated chapter on Women and Development. On the whole, these have primarily regarded women as resources to be mobilized for national good. A woman has been participating actively in the nation's development. The ability and capability of women have been harnessed fully without any form of discrimination. For example the figure for student's enrolment in university is currently shows female and male students registered at the university at 69 percent and 31 percent respectively. Despite progress made by women in all key economic sectors in Malaysia, the majority of women remain concentrated in low skilled and low waged jobs and very few in top managerial and decision-making posts. Women living in rural and remote areas in Malaysia have been documented as lagging behind that of their urban-dwelling counterparts in terms of wealth and literacy. Malaysia's poverty has been a predominantly rural phenomenon.

A study done by Mohd Noor (2007) found that "There exists a disparity between the digital/information rich and the digital/information poor among various groups in Malaysia. Coincidentally, the pattern is that the former is located in urban areas whilst the latter in rural, as similar scenario as in the case of poverty. Regardless of location, however, women tend to be the primary seekers of information for their children and other family members, as well as for themselves in rural Malaysia, more often than not; these women will perform the tasks of women for the family. It is pertinent to note here that in the rural setting there is a strong kinship relationship that existed among the villagers, especially among the community of women in the villages. It is believed that women roles have an impact on families and societies. If they perform accordingly their roles and duties, a quality generation will be produced. Of course in order to achieve that, a

sufficient amount of information is a necessity. Here, libraries could play an important role of supplying enough information for them. In addition to taking care of the family, a house wife is also expected to know something on health matters, children education and the family economics.

Information is an important resource for individual growth and survival. The progresses of Modern societies as well as individuals depend a great deal upon the provision of the right kind of information, in the right form and at the right time. Information is needed to be able to take a right decision and also reduce uncertainty. A businessman needs information to be able to improve in his existing business just like a specialist also need information to be up-to-date and well informed in his area of specialization. If information is this valuable, it must be put to proper use, i.e. made available to people or group of people who need it, after ascertaining the group's information needs and seeking behavior.

The Webster's dictionary sees "Rural" as relating to or characteristics of people who live in the country opposed to urban, characterized by simplicity, lacking sophistication and engaged in agricultural pursuits. To Nzirimo, rural people (which by the implication rural women) are characterized by the following; extreme poverty, malnutrition, lack of electricity, inadequate school facilities, with in-experienced teachers, inadequate and poor media facilities since rural women are women that live in the rural areas mostly illiterates, their jobs activities are bound to be unskillful jobs that does not require expertise, they involved in house-keeping and farming.

Oxford dictionary defined "Artisan" as someone who uses traditional skills and tools

to make thing. Wikipedia went further to describe Artisan as a skilled manual worker who makes items that may be functional or strictly decorative including furniture, clothing and jewelry household items and tools or machines such as handmade device of a watch maker. It is also a person that engages in or occupied by the practice of a craft, who may through experience and talent reach the expressive levels of an art in their work and what they create.

Awasthi (2004) posits that outside farming, rural women are equally involved in such occupational like pottery, cloth making, hairdressing, tailoring etc. for these groups of people to perform excellently in their work activities, they require information. The information seeking behavior depends on their individual personalities, attitudes, values, system, behavior and level of socialization. In other words, it is the product of their socio-cultural, economic, environmental and individual characteristics. For any meaningful information to be provided, certain relevant information sources must be consulted. It is only through such sources that information seekers can obtain information that is ideal for a meaningful decision-making leading to increase in productivity. For the researcher, clientele and various users to elicit data on the information sources used for needed information various information sources includes books, journals, magazines and newspapers, annual reports, handbooks etc.

Taylor (2008) viewed that information needs is a personal and unconscious conditions. He articulated four levels of information need that an individual passes through before he or she makes formal encounters with an information professionals. These levels are visceral need, conscious need, formalized need and compromised need. Information need is an individual or groups desire to

locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious need or unconscious need. Aina (2004) asserted that the artisans and rural dwellers need information mainly for survival. Hence any information that will improve their productivity and attract more customers will be critical to their survival. It is therefore expected that a library will provide services that will meet this critical need.

Igwe (2012) describes information seeking behavior as an individual way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. According to the International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science (1997) defined information seeking behavior as the complex patterns of actions and interactions which people engage in when seeing information of whatever kind and for whatever purpose. Information seeking behavior is expressed in various media available in libraries e.g. encyclopedia, journals and more currently electronic media. The information seeking behavior of a user depends on education, access to library and the length of a time user wishes to devote to information seeking.

Wilson (2000) posits information seeking behavior as that which involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvian (1996), defines information seeking behavior as expressed in various forms, from reading printed materials to research, an experimentation scholars, students and faculties actively, seeking current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopedia, journals and more currently, electronic media. The information needs and information seeking behavior of women artisans in Off a

metropolis which includes; tailors, hairdressers, cloth weavers and embroiderer, make-up artists, pedicurist and manicurists. These group of people have specific information need like other people with a specialized profession which is based on their work activity. For instance, a tailor will need information on the current styles and new materials which can be used to sew, while the information needs of the hairdressers will be majorly on the current hairstyles and the products of cosmetician to be used in their work. The major information which a cloth weaver and embroiderer needs include information on the current designs that will suit a cloth and the price of the materials used in their course of works, whereas the makeup artists, pedicurists and manicurists require information on the care of hands and legs, more also the quality kind of facial treatments and their price. Communication is about connecting with our needs, expressing them and receiving other people's needs. It is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, message of the information as by speech, visuals, signals, written or behavior. It is the meaningful exchange of information between two or more people.

Information seeking behavior plays a critical role in women's effort to cope with the day to day concerns associated with home activities. Effective communication of information is known to be the key to optional housing productivity. Therefore, understanding what women need to know, when during the crop-care continuum, and how they acquire needed information becomes vital role to ensure the delivery of quality and need based information.

Materials and Methods

The Faizabad district of U.P. was selected purposively selected as locale for present

investigation because the researcher was well acquainted with the locality and culture. The district Faizabad comprised of 11 community development blocks namely – sohawal, Masodha, Purabazar, Mayabazar, Milkipur, Amaniganj, bikapur, Tarun, Harinteenganj, Rudauli and Mawai. Out of these 11 blocks, the milkipur block was selected purposively for the study because of its easy accessibility and familiarity of researcher with the local language, socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

An exhaustive list of the village of Milkipur block was prepared and 4 villages were selected randomly. Moreover, list of farm families from each of the selected village was prepared and 25 women from each of the selected village were identified through random sampling technique. Thus a total of 100 rural women constitutes the sample size for the purpose of further investigation. The pattern of the seeking information among rural women in the research problem was found out with the help of duration, frequency, purpose of accessing information from various sources.

The effectiveness of the information sources was found out by accessing trustworthiness, creditability and cost effectiveness of the information sources among the selected women and one woman was selected from each family.

Results and Discussion

A perusal of the Table 5.3.1 indicates that the maximum number of the respondents (90%) who adopted a rank of first were agreed with the statements that “lack of education among women” is the common problem, followed by “women face more drudgery in gaining information” (80%) at rank second, “women

are more prone to health problems because of their body softness” (80%) at rank third, “women usually use their time as indoor activities hence they lack time for gaining any new information” (70%) at rank fourth, “poor decision making with women in gaining information” (70%) at rank fifth, “lack of pertinent knowledge about new innovation” (70%) at rank sixth, “negative social attitude about women” (60%) at rank seventh, “negative social attitude about women” (60%) at rank eighth, “Lack of security” (60%) at rank ninth, “due to parda pratha, women are restricted within the boundary of home” (50%) at rank tenth, “women suffer from family conflict” (50%) at rank eleventh, “lack of security” (50%) at rank twelfth, “Lack of training programme” (50%) at rank thirteenth, “Lack of contact with information sources” (40%) at rank fourteenth, “Lack of information and awareness” (50%) at rank fifteenth also reported by a considerable number of respondents.

Suggestions

The Table includes the perceived solution given by the respondents regarding problems in seeking information. The maximum number of respondents suggested some solution like we must adjust with routine work being done (90%) at a rank first, followed by increase the level of education (80%) at a rank second, change the decision for women (80%) at a rank third, increase the pertinent knowledge (70%) at a rank fourth, change the attitude about the women (70%) at a rank fifth, change the negative social attitude (70%) at a rank sixth, increase the security of women (60%) at a rank seventh, increase the sources to increase the family income (60%) at a rank eighth.

Table.1 The problems in seeking information as perceived by the respondents

S. No.	Problems	Respondents		Ranks
		Number of respondents	Percentage	
1.	Lack of education among women affects their information seeking behavior.	90	90%	1 st
2.	Women face more drudgery in gaining information.	70	70%	4 th
3.	Women are more prone to health problems because of their body softness.	70	70%	5 th
4.	Women usually use their time as in indoor activities hence they lack time for gaining any new information.	50	50%	10 th
5.	Poor decision making with women in gaining information.	80	80%	2 nd
6.	Lack of pertinent knowledge about new innovation.	80	80%	3 rd
7.	Negative social attitude about women role outside the home.	70	70%	6 th
8.	Due to parda pratha, women's are restricted within the boundary of their home.	60	60%	7 th
9.	Lack of security of women.	40	40%	14 th
10.	Lack of family income to buy the media sources.	50	50%	11 th
11.	Lack of financing institution particularly for women in rural areas.	60	60%	8 th
12.	Shortage of mass media sources.	50	50%	12 th
13.	Lack of training programmes.	60	60%	9 th
14.	Lack of contact with information sources.	40	40%	15 th
15.	Lack of information and awareness.	50	50%	13 th

Table.2 Perceived solution given by the respondents

S. No.	Solution	Respondents		Rank s
		Number of respondents	Percentage	
1.	Increase the level of education among women.	90	90%	1 st
2.	Change the decision about the women.	70	70%	4 th
3.	Provide more time to the women for gaining more information.	60	60%	7 th
4.	Increase the pertinent knowledge about the women role outside the homes.	60	60%	8 th
5.	Change the negative social attitude about the women.	70	70%	5 th
6.	Increase the security of the women.	40	40%	11 th
7.	Provide the sources to increase the family income.	60	60%	9 th
8.	Increase the financing institution particularly for women.	80	80%	2 nd
9.	Increase the demand of mass- media sources.	40	40%	12 th
10.	Increase the training programmes in rural areas.	80	80%	3 rd
11.	Increase the contact with information sources.	60	60%	10 th
12.	Increase the information and awareness.	70	70%	6 th

Eights, increase the financing institution (60%) at a adopt rank ninth, and increase the demand of mass media sources (60%) at a adopt rank tenth, increase the training programmes (80%), and increase the contact with information sources (40%) adopt rank eleventh, increase the information and awareness(40%) at a adopt rank twelve , respectively.

In conclusion, the main problems in seeking behavior as encountered by the maximum respondents were lack of education among

women (90%), lack of training programme (60%), lack of security (40%), lack of family income (50%) and lack of financing institution (60.00%), shortage of mass media sources (50%) respectively.

Perceived solution given by the respondents

The main solution given by respondents about problems in seeking information as perceived by the respondents were we must increase the education level(90%), increase the training

programmes (80%), increase the security of women (80%) and increase the financing institutions (80%), increase the mass media sources (40%), respectively.

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