

## Information Need, Perceived Credibility of Information Sources Among Rural Women

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### ABSTRACT

Information is an important resource for individual growth and survival. Information is very critical component in taking decision by rural women, so a study was conducted to assess the information need, information sources and their perceived credibility among rural women. The study was undertaken in two districts of Uttar Pradesh namely Hapur and Ghaziabad with 120 respondents. Both the district was selected purposively as a part of study of a project conducted by Connecting Dream Foundation. From each district two villages were selected purposively and from each villages 30 respondents were selected randomly. Study reported that 75.00 percent of rural women have high information need related to health & credit issues followed by government schemes/services (72.50%) followed by education (58.33%) followed by Agriculture (41.75%). Only 12.50 per cent rural women expressed high information need regarding gender related issues & 65 per cent rural women reported to have medium information need on same aspects. It was found that most of the rural women (80%) regularly use family as source of information, followed by friends/neighbors (62.20). Family members were perceived most credible source of information by rural women (80%), followed by friend/neighbors (73.33). So it is observed that there is huge information gap exist regarding specific information need of rural women and therefore need to be addressed in order to informational empowerment of rural women in particular and overall empowerment in general. Through using various information sources based on credibility accorded to these sources by rural women, specific information need can be addressed more appropriately.

**Key words:** Connecting dream foundation, information source, information need.

### INTRODUCTION

The progress of modern societies as well as individuals depends 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 businesswoman 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. In the same way in order to make proper decision and judicious choices rural women have their specific information needs which vary with place and time. 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. The main objective of information society is to empower all the people through

access to and use of information, but there is concern that some people, including women, are more distant than others from the opportunities presented by the changes being created by ICTs.

Women's education and empowerment have been important social, economic, and political issues in the developing countries like India and after the independence India has achieved a lot in these areas. Women of our country are now actively participating in decision making at home in family as well as in national and international socio-economic and political development. Women, irrespective of location, need information on range of issues like family health, food and nutrition, family planning and child education, government scheme & services, family planning, credit facilities, government schemes and programmes but at the same rural women also need information regarding

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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 do not have much access to various Information and Communication Technology (ICTs). Because of this information gap rural women are largely remained backward in various part of life. The rural women are considered as underutilized and unexploited national resources, if utilized properly rural women can be made empower which in turn helpful in empowering nation as a whole. If rural women get opportunity to various information sources they will get empowered which would resulted in more active participation in development programme. since rural women are women that live in the rural areas

Aina (2004) posits that outside farming, rural women are equally involved in such occupational like pottery, cloth making, hairdressing, tailoring *etc.* for this group 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.* viewed that information needs is a personal and unconscious conditions.

Articulated four levels of information need that an individual passes through before he or she makes formal encounters with an information professionals. Information need is an individual or groups desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious need or unconscious need. The rural women have specific information need which is based on their work, activity, interest, profession. The information needs of rural women are indigenous information which can be transmitted informally. The information seeking behavior of women in the urban part of the country differs from those in the rural parts because women in the urban part of the country are exposed to technologies and evolving environment which aid their quick access to information than those in rural communities. Dutta (2009) reported that “there is relatively small number of studies done on the information behavior of the citizens of developing

countries”, and that, “the few concentrated on the educated individuals and the urban population located in the large cities than on citizens who live in the rural areas”. Knowing the information need and sources used by rural women and their perceived credibility among them help in better planning and will be a crucial input in decision making regarding rural women development programme. Therefore special attention needs to be given in order to address information need of the rural women and access to various information sources should be made available for promoting information rich society.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The state was selected purposively for the study since Connecting Dream Foundation (NGO) is working there since its inception. 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 purposively since the Connecting Dream Foundation was working there since its inception. From Hapur district of Uttar Pradesh, Lalpur and Shyampur village were selected purposively since CDF is operating in these villages of the district. Similarly Dohai and Samana villages from Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh were purposively 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 information need of rural women, information sources they used and perceived credibility of various information sources, a proper interview schedules were 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. The data regarding information need, sourced and perceived credibility of information sources were analyzed using mean and frequency statistics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the result depicted in Table 1, it was found that 75 per cent of rural women had high information need regarding health & credit issues, followed by 72.50 per cent having high information need related to government schemes/services and 41.75 per

cent had high information need about agriculture. Most of the rural women expressed high information need about health and government schemes, credit provision reflects increased level of awareness among rural women on diverse range of issues. Only 11.66 per cent respondents reported to had high information need about politics and 12.50 per cent had high information need about legal right. This is because still politics is considered as male dominated field because of various social and cultural reason, so women are quite passive about political information need.

46 per cent of respondents reported that they had high information need regarding ICT tools (mobile, television, computer) which was found to be very positive development because they are very keen to know about modern ICT tools and how to use it. As expected 62.50 per cent respondents were found to had high information need about market (price of the products, market news *etc.*) since most of the respondents main occupation is agriculture and allied activities. Most of the rural women (58.53%) reported to had high information need regarding education of their children/self- followed by 31.67 per cent with medium and 10 per cent reported to have low information need about education. Nearly half of the respondents (45.83%) reported high information need regarding family planning, followed by 36.66 per cent and 17.50 per cent expressed medium and low information need for family planning respectively. It was also found that 75 per cent of rural women had high information need regarding access to credit, followed by 20 per cent medium, and 6 per cent with low information need. A very high proportion of rural women expressed about high information need regarding credit facilities maybe due to the fact of very limited access to credit and very hectic official procedures which they were not aware at all. About 23.33 per cent rural women reported that they had low information need about agriculture, followed by about ICT tools 20.83 per cent. Only 12.50 per cent of rural women reported to had high information need regarding legal right, while 30.83 and 55.66 per cent reported to have medium and low information need respectively.

Analysis of the data given in Table 1 also suggested that information need regarding credit facilities were found to rank 1st followed by information for government schemes and market related information by rural women. Information need about education, health, family planning, ICT tools were ranked as 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th respectively. This trend shows rural women are equally actively seek various information for making decision for herself and family.

**Table1: Information Need of Rural Women**

**n=120**

Area of information need	Low		Medium		High		Weighted mean	Rank
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Agriculture	28	23.33	42	35.00	50	41.67	2.18	IX
Education	12	10.00	39	31.67	69	58.53	2.48	IV
Entertainment	40	33.33	70	58.33	10	8.33	1.75	XII
Family Planning	21	17.50	44	36.66	55	45.83	2.28	VI
Health	21	17.50	28	23.33	71	75.00	2.42	V
Credit Facilities	6	5.00	24	20.00	90	75.00	2.70	I
Employment Opportunity	10	8.33	77	64.16	33	27.5	2.19	VIII
Politics	58	48.33	48	40.00	14	11.66	1.63	XIII
Legal	68	56.66	37	30.83	15	12.50	1.56	XIV
Weather	41	34.16	64	52.5	15	12.5	1.78	XI
Market	15	12.50	30	25.00	75	62.50	2.50	III
Govt. Scheme	11	9.17	22	18.33	87	72.50	2.63	II
ICT Tools	25	20.83	40	33.33	55	45.83	2.25	VII
Gender	32	26.66	73	60.83	15	12.50	1.86	X

Table 2 represented various source of information and their frequency of use by rural women. It was found that most of the rural women (80 %) regularly uses family as source of information, followed by friends/neighbors (62.20 %), and followed by television (58.33%). The above results are more or less similar to those of Onemolease (2002), who concluded from a study in Nigeria that major source of information on improved farming practices for rural women in Nigeria was family/friends (89.17%) followed by radio (41.67%), extension agent (8.33%) and newspapers (5.83%). It was observed that still women in study area do not take decision by their own and also don't have much access various information sources so they largely dependent on family and friends for information on various issues. Television has also reported to be important source of information because almost all respondents had television in their house. About 29.17 per cent of rural women reported to use radio regularly as a source of information, followed by 54.17 and 16.67 per cent using occasionally and never respectively. Agricultural magazine and mobile with internet facility were used regularly as information source by 3.33 per cent and 4.16 per cent rural women respectively because of the illiteracy issues and limited access. Only 10.83 per cent of rural women reported to get access to information through local input dealer regularly. About 76.60 per cent of rural women never use computer with internet facility as their source of information because of the fact of unavailability and lack of skilled to operate it, while 65.00 percent respondents reported to had never used agriculture magazine, followed by mobile with internet (67.50%). Only 8.33 per

cent of respondents reported that they use newspaper as their regular source of information, followed by 53.34 and 38.33 per cent used occasionally and never respectively. About 54.17 per cent rural women reported that they use radio occasionally followed by television (38.33). A small number of rural women (8.33%) reported to had never used television to get access to information. As the table 2 suggested study reported that family were found to be rank 1st as information source of rural women followed by friends and television. Radio, teacher, NGO, input dealer were found to be other important sources of information for rural women and ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively.

**Table 2: Information Source of Rural Women and their frequency of Use n=120**

Information Source	Never		Occasionally		Regular		Weighted mean	Rank
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)		
Radio	23	19.167	42	35.000	55	45.833	1.27	IV
T. V.	11	9.167	40	33.333	69	57.500	1.48	III
News paper	46	38.333	64	53.333	10	8.333	0.70	IX
Mob-internet	81	67.500	34	28.333	5	4.167	0.37	XI
Agricultural magazine	78	65.000	38	31.667	4	3.333	0.38	X
NGO's	20	16.667	65	54.167	35	29.167	1.13	VI
Field worker	24	20.000	86	71.667	10	8.333	0.88	VIII
Friend/Neighbor	15	12.500	30	25.000	75	62.500	1.50	II
Family Member	3	2.500	21	17.500	96	80.000	1.78	I
Teacher	8	6.667	87	72.500	25	20.833	1.14	V
Input dealer	3	2.500	104	86.667	13	10.833	1.08	VII

The present Table 3 clearly stated that family members were found to most credible source of information for rural women (80%), followed by friend/neighbors (73.33%). While 64.16 per cent of respondent's perceived television as highly credible as information source, 62.50 per cent reported radio as highly credible information source. 31.40 percent of rural women reported NGOs as highly credible source of information by followed by 49.59 and 19.01 per cent who perceived medium and low respectively. It was also reported that some respondents (4.16 per cent) perceived television and 6.67 per cent perceived radio as low credible of newspaper as information source. Twenty per cent of the rural women consider newspaper as highly credible, 73.33 per cent considered it as source with medium credibility while 6.67 per cent rural women reported to low credibility as information source. About 23 per cent of women found computer as high credible information source, 55.83 per cent accorded medium credibility, and 17.50 per cent women did not find computer as credible, information source. Magazines were reported by 47.50 per cent high credible as information source while 43.33 per cent considered it

medium credible and 9.16 per cent respondents accorded low credibility as information source. Input dealer was perceived by 27.50 per cent +respondents as high credible source of information while 5.83 per cent respondents considered Input dealer as low credible information source.

**Table 3: Perceived Credibility of Different Information Sources n=120**

Information Source	Low		Medium		High		Weighted mean	Rank
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)		
Radio	8	6.667	37	30.833	75	62.500	2.56	IV
Television	5	4.167	38	31.667	77	64.167	2.60	III
News paper	11	9.167	93	77.500	16	13.333	2.04	IX
Mobile with internet	26	21.667	73	60.833	21	17.500	1.96	XI
Agricultural magazine	27	22.500	43	35.833	50	41.667	2.19	VI
Computer with internet	24	20.000	68	56.667	28	23.333	2.03	X
NGO	23	19.167	60	50.000	37	30.833	2.12	VIII
Field worker	24	20.000	86	71.667	10	8.333	1.88	XII
Friend/Neighbor	15	12.500	17	14.167	88	73.333	2.61	II
Family Member	3	2.500	21	17.500	96	80.000	2.78	I
Teacher	8	6.667	87	72.500	25	20.833	2.14	VII
Input dealer	4	3.333	85	70.833	31	25.833	2.23	V

As for as credibility of different sources of information are concerned, family members were reported as most credible source of information by the respondents followed by friends. Televisions and radio were also considered as very credible source of information as they were ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. Field workers and mobile with internet facility were considered as least credible information source by rural women.

## CONCLUSION

Some important and very Useful conclusions can be drawn from the study that the rural women from Uttar Pradesh state, India, knows the importance of information as majority of the rural women use family members, friends and relatives as their major source of information. They use the information they get to understand their occupation better, as farming is the major source of livelihood for the rural women in the studied communities. Study reported that 75 per cent of rural women had high information need regarding health & credit issues, followed by 72.50 per cent having high information need related to government schemes/services A large number of women (41.50 %) reported to have high information need concerned with agriculture since most

of the respondents belongs to farm families and engages in farm occupation very actively. Majority of the rural women (80%) regularly approach family members for information on diverse issues followed by friends/neighbors (62.20%), and television (58.33%). Study also suggested that family members were found to most credible source of information for rural women (80%), followed by friend/neighbors (73.33%). While 64.16 per cent of respondent's perceived television as highly credible as information source. One of the major barriers militating against access to information by rural women in India is lack of adequate library resources, illiteracy particularly in rural areas. Most of the rural areas in India lacks standard library services to meet their information need which in turn act as major barrier in the information empowerment of rural women. As present study reported about the major area of information need of rural women we should make efforts in planning to addressed the same and used compatible and useful information source. Radio and television along with modern communication tools like internet should designed in such a way that they provide information in very personalized and customized way in their local dialects. Government should try to collaborate with local agencies like NGO and others self-help group in order to package and disseminate the right information that meet the needs of the rural women in different localities. The rural women should be encouraged to use modern ICT tools, electronic gadgets as this can help in their recreational readings, empowering information rich to rural women.

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