

## INFORMATION-SEEKING AND SHARING BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL WOMEN

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*Information-seeking and sharing behavior of rural women are two important aspects which affect the success of developmental programme. The study showed that friends are most frequently contacted for information whereas information-sharing among women was found to be low.*

Women constitute half of the human population and thus, have a tremendous role to play in the dynamic process of social change. Various developmental programmes have failed to create the desired change in women's life. To make programmes more effective, the very fabric of women's life has to be understood, i.e., with whom they consult in case of some problem, the frequency of contact, factors affecting information-seeking behaviour and with how many fellow women they share information of new and improved practices are to be looked into. The present study was thus carried out to study the information seeking and the information-sharing behaviour of rural women.

The information-seeking behaviour can be defined as the extent to which a rural woman approach to different sources for information on improved practices and advice to solve her problems. The women get exposure to the information on improved practice through random information encounters and/or deliberate information seeking.

The information-sharing behaviour can be measured in terms of a woman's contribution to the horizontal and vertical flow of information within the village social system.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Sonebhadra district of U. P. The village Sarauli of Ghorawal block

was selected purposively because of researcher's familiarity with the area. All the married women numbering 219 were taken as respondents. Due to non-availability of two women, the final sample size constituted of 217 respondents.

The information-seeking behaviour was measured by the scale of Gogoi (1984) which is the cumulative score obtained by a respondent in terms of her frequency of contact with specified sources of information, multiplied by the weightage given to the respective sources on the basis of their level of competency. A three-point scale was used to measure the frequency of contact with each source, i.e. never (0 score) few times (1 score) and many times (2 score). The weightage given to the sources were relatives (1 score), friends (2 score), Progressive people (3 score), Govt. extension functionaries (4 score) and out side person/ agency (5 score). The information-seeking behaviour score was calculated with the following formula :

$$\text{Information-seeking behaviour score} = \sum_{i=1}^N C_i W_i$$

Where,

$C_i$  = Score for the frequency of contact which  $i^{\text{th}}$  source of information

$W_i$  = Weightage given to  $i^{\text{th}}$  source of information on the basis of level of competency

$N$  = Number of sources (in the case  $n=5$ )

The information-sharing behaviour was operationalized as the cumulative score obtained by a respondent on the basis of number of women contacted multiplied by the weightage.

### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

**Information-seeking Behaviour**—The Table 1. reveals that friends are the most frequently sought

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for seeking information followed by relatives progressive people and outside person/agency.

**Table 1. Frequency of contact with information sources**

Information source	Frequency
Relatives	211
Friends	215
Progressive people	198
Government functionary	25
Outside person/Agency	46

Government functionaries were least contacted for seeking information; Jha and Chauhan, 1998 reported that friends, neighbors and relatives were the most sought after sources for information of farm and dairy activities.

**Correlation of information-seeking behaviour with selected variables**—Correlation coefficients were calculated to find out the inter-relationship of information-seeking behaviour with selected variables like age, education, land holding, mass-media expousers, localiteness-cosmopoliteness, empathy, fatalism-scienticism and achievement motivation.

The data shown in Table 2. clearly revealed that the variables, viz. mass-media exposure, localiteness-cosmopoliteness are significantly and negatively correlated with information-seeking behaviour. This shows that woman who are cosmopolite and have more mass-media exposure get the required information and do not have to contact other interpersonal sources for information.

Empathy was significantly and positively correlated with information-seeking behaviour showing that those who empathize contact more source for information.

**Table 2. Correlation coefficients between information-seeking behaviour and different variables**

Variable	'r' values
Age	0.06824 <sup>NS</sup>
Education	0.056392 <sup>NS</sup>
Land holding	-0.035625
Mass-media Exposure	-0.158991*
Localiteness-cosmopoliteness	-0.155693*
Empathy	0.165017*
Fatalism-scienticism	0.018439 <sup>NS</sup>
Achievement motivation	0.116832 <sup>NS</sup>

\* Significant at 5 per cent level of probability  
NS : Not significant

The variables viz., age, education, land holding, fatalism-scienticism and achievement motivation do not have any correlation with information-seeking behaviour.

**Information-sharing behavior**—The distribution of the respondents according to their extent of information sharing have been presented in Table-3.

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to their extent of information sharing behaviour**

N = 127

Category	Frequency
Low [1-4]	149 (68.66%)
Medium [5-8]	59 (27.19%)
High [9-11]	9 (04.15%)

\* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

The number of married women contacted by the respondents for information of farm, household activities ranged from 1 to 11.

It is clear from the table 6.22 that majority (68.66) of the respondents had low information-sharing behaviour followed by medium (27.19%) and high (4.15%). Such trend in the result may be due to the existence of number of small groups. So, information remains confined within the group members. These results are in contrast with the findings of Gogoi (1985) who found high information-sharing among Farmers of non-progressive village. He said that the farmers of progressive village might be more competitive and the information on improved farm practices had high "utility value" for them. So, instead of sharing with fellow farmers, they adopt it on the own farms to be first and ahead of others to reap the maximum benefit.

The reason for this contradictory result may be due to the fact that the inter-group interaction in the study village was observed to be low. So the information-sharing between groups was also less.

## CONCLUSION

Friends and relatives were most sought after for information. This indicates that women feel comfortable in asking questions from those are well known to them.

The information-seeking from relatives, friends, progressive people, government functionaries and outside agencies decrease with increase in mass-media exposure and cosmopolitaness whereas, it increased in empathy level. The information-sharing was low as women tend to remain confined in their own groups which were rather small in size.

Thus, this study reflects that there is a need to modify the existing communication network of women as well a to sensitise them so that can be more exchange of information, resources and expertise for development of women and village as a whole.

### REFERENCES

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