

Effectiveness of Low Cost Communication Package on Enhancing Awareness on Entrepreneurial Skills of Women in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

The development of entrepreneurship among women has become one of the most important factors for determining the success of the economic activities undertaken by women. Though in India, in recent years the women entrepreneurship had gained a momentum but still the women are capable of contributing much more than that what they already are. The purpose of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of designed low cost communication package on enhancing awareness on entrepreneurial skills of women in Self Help Groups (SHGs). The study was carried out in Hawalbagh block of Almora district of Uttarakhand considering the entrepreneurial activities and availability of active and functional SHGs under various Government and NGOs. All the 80 members of six women SHGs under two villages namely village Bakh and village Sar ki ali constituted sample for the present investigation. Interview schedule was used for data collection and Knowledge test was developed for measuring gain in knowledge of the respondents. The findings on the effect of Low Cost Communication Package in terms of gain in knowledge showed that majority of respondents (56.25%) had medium level of knowledge gained. The social- economic variables age, caste, marital status, family type, and family size were negatively and non-significantly correlated with gain in knowledge. Land holdings, annual income and occupation were positively but non-significantly correlated with gain in knowledge. Education was positively and significantly correlated with gain in knowledge. Among the communication characteristics mass media exposure, information seeking behaviour and social participation were positively and significantly related with gain in knowledge.

Keywords: *Low cost communication package; Entrepreneurial skills; Self Help Group; Women entrepreneurs;*

The women especially rural women possess a unique skill and capacity of managing both home and farm but still lack a prominent position mainly due to social structure of the Indian society. Women in hills regions due to small land holdings and abrupt weather conditions have little income from direct agriculture while the men population mainly has migrated to plain region for earning livelihood. Hence, the women in hill region have switched over to other enterprises for adding their economic resources mainly through organizing themselves in SHGs. The main aim of the women SHGs is to make women economically empowered which will in turn lead to the political and social development of the women. It is recited that income generation through

economic activity under SHGs is dependent on entrepreneurship quality of the women. However, the proportion of women entrepreneurs in small industries reveals abysmally low at ten percent due to lack of awareness and knowledge, social structure, communication characteristics and low level of entrepreneurial traits. Therefore, the study was designed to create awareness among women entrepreneurs under SHGs regarding entrepreneurial skills.

Women in Uttarakhand are still dependent on interpersonal channels of communication. They relied on the spoken words and traditional means of communication. This is emphasized because of their restricted roles and lack of proper education

(Yadav and Bhardwaj, 2008). Knowledge and information are essential to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes. Thus, the knowledge of women needed to be improved by useful, knowledge education as well as by developing and adopting proper communication strategies. Effective communication tools are very important in effecting change which forms the basis of decision making and effective functional skills needed for person involve in any organization (Amuseghan, 2008). However, single aid may not be suitable under all conditions. Media using combined visual and auditory communicative modes result in more effective learning than sound or print alone (Phair, 1975 and Verma, 2002). Hence, the study was focused on developing a low cost communication package with the purpose of disseminating knowledge regarding entrepreneurial skills among the respondents with the following objectives.

- i. To study the socio-economic and communication characteristics of the women SHGs members.
- ii. To study the effectiveness of designed communication package on enhancing awareness on entrepreneurial skills of women in SHGs.
- iii. To find out the relationship between gain in knowledge and socio- economic and communication characteristics of respondents.

METHODOLOGY

Uttarakhand constitutes the universe for the present study. District Almora was selected by using simple random sampling. Out of which Hawalbagh block was selected purposively considering the entrepreneurial activities and availability of active and functional SHGs under various Government NGOs. Two villages namely village *Bakh* and village *Sar ka ali* were selected using simple random sampling through chit method. All the members of six women SHGS were selected by using census method. So, total eighty respondents constituted sample for the present investigation. The experimental research design was used to assess the total effect of the selected Low Cost Communication Package.

Selection of low cost communication package: The criteria called ACTIONS, given by Tony Bates (2005) were used for media selection. The criteria ACTIONS stands for Accessibility, Cost effectiveness, Teaching and learning, Interactivity and User- friendliness,

Table 1. Profile of the SHGs selected for the study

Name of SHGs	No. of members	Monthly savings (Rs)	Meeting
Aedi	12	50	Fortnightly
Gar devi	14	50	Fortnightly
Jyoti	14	30	Fortnightly
Sem	10	50	Fortnightly
Mahila kalyan sangathan	15	50	Weekly
Swa Shakti	15	50	Weekly

Organizational issues, Novelty and Speed. On the basis of all these parameters of media selection, the following media were selected for the present study: Flash Cards and Folder. Brief description of this Low Cost Communication Package is given here:

Flash Cards: The objective of the Flash Cards was to provide an in-depth knowledge about entrepreneurial skills. The dimensions of the flash cards were 11×14 inches. Total numbers of cards were 12. The title of flash cards was “*udyamita koshal* “.The series of 12 flash cards were used to provide information on entrepreneurial skills particularly planning skills, leadership ability, decision making ability, market orientation and coordination ability needed to run an enterprise successfully.

Folder: The objective of folder was to create awareness among women members of the SHGs regarding entrepreneurial skills. The message in the folder was written in their common dialect i.e. Hindi with local terminologies. During implementation of folder, it was observed that every member can read and understand the message clearly. The dimensions of the folder were 22cm×28cm with two folds.

Knowledge test was developed for measuring gain in knowledge of the respondents. The test included all the dimensions to be tested. On the basis of pilot testing and expert validity, the items for final knowledge test were selected. Its reliability and validity was measured before actually administering the test. Spearman-Brown statistical formula was used for obtaining the reliability. The reliability coefficient was 0.67 calculated through Split half method.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data in both the phases of the study. The quantitative information regarding profile and information needs was collected through properly modified and pre-tested interview schedule and informal

discussion and knowledge test. Observation technique was used to enrich the data and verify the responses of the respondents. In order to collect some other information, secondary sources mainly on entry of their pass books, ledger, minutes' books, registers, attendance sheet and others were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of women entrepreneurs under SHGs : The data in Table 2 reveals the socio- economic and communication characteristics of the respondents. Majority of the respondents i.e. 68.75 per cent were found in the middle age category (29-41 years) followed by 17.50 per cent of respondents who were in young age category and rest of the (13.75%) of respondents were in old age category. The reason might be that in hilly areas most of the work related to agriculture, business etc. is done by middle aged women and young age women mostly engaged in education while most of the old age women did not work.

Table 2. Profile of women entrepreneurs under SHGs (N=80)

SEC characteristics	Percentage (Majority of Population)
Age	68.75 (Middle age group)
Education	32.50 (Up to high school)
Caste	72.50 (General)
Marital status	88.75 (Married)
Family type	78.75 (Nuclear)
Family size	60.00 (Medium)
Land holdings	53.75 (Small)
Occupation	41.25 (Agriculture)
Annual income	66.25 (Middle)
Media ownership	100.00 (Television)
Mass media utilization	100.00 (Television)
Info. seeking behaviour	93.75 (Friends)
Social participation	45.00 (Member of one organization)

Maximum percentages of the respondents (32.50%) were educated up to high school followed by higher secondary (18.75%). While 17.50 per cent of the respondents were illiterate and 13.75 per cent had education up to primary school followed by 12.50 per cent of respondents educated up to middle school. Only five per cent had education up to graduate level. It indicates that considerable numbers of respondents were educated while few were found to be uneducated. It was found that majority of respondents had education above primary level that shows the growing importance

of education among rural mass. Lower percentage of highly educated people reflects the fact that literacy rate of most of the respondents was low due to presence of only one university within the proximity of the place, lack of opportunity for higher education and motivation among the people might be the reasons for this.

Traditionally, the villages have been divided into various caste groups. The respondents of the present villages were categorized into three groups. Most of the respondents (72.50%) were in general category followed by 15 per cent of respondents under OBC category. It was revealed that 12.50 per cent of the respondents belonged to SC/ST category. The reason might be that the respondents in higher hierarchy within the social structure were comparatively more active than the respondents in lower hierarchy in the society. Majority of the respondents (88.75%) were married followed by other (11.25%). None of the respondents were found unmarried. By discussion it was found that in rural areas most of the girls got married by the age of 18-20 years.

Most of the respondents (78.75) belonged to nuclear family followed by joint family (17.50). Only 3.75 per cent respondents belonged to extended family. It has been observed that in rural areas the nuclear family system is gradually replacing joint family system similar to rest of the country. This might be due to socio-cultural reasons (replacement of old traditional system with modern progressive system) or economic reasons (small families are easy to maintain with less economic burden). Majority of the respondents (60%) had medium sized families and 26.25 per cent belonged to large size families. It was followed by 7.50 per cent and 6.25 per cent of the respondents who belonged to small and very large families respectively. It may also be concluded that people in this area were well aware of the social and economic benefits of family planning.

More than half of the respondents (53.75%) were small farmers followed by medium category (25%) and marginal category (16.25 per cent). Only five per cent of the respondents belonged to landless category. It emerged from the above analysis that in rural areas of hills, very few respondents were landless as agriculture is still their major means of livelihood. Maximum numbers of respondents i.e. 41.25 per cent were engaged in agriculture followed by 23.75 per cent of the respondents in business. It was found that 15 per cent of the respondents were doing agriculture with labor as their

source of income while 11.25 per cent were engaged in business with agriculture as their occupation. Only 8.75 per cent of the respondents were housewives. Agriculture is considered to be major occupation in the sample area. Moreover, due to availability of abundant resources women in hills were also doing some business activities.

Majority of the respondents belonged to middle income category (66.25%) followed by high income (18.75%) and low income category (15 per cent). The reason for such distribution may be that as maximum respondents had land holding up to 2.5 - 5 acres with some secondary sources of income. Television was owned by all of the respondents (100%) followed by 97.50 per cent who owned radio and mobile phones respectively. Newspaper was owned by half of the respondents (50%) while 32.50 per cent of the respondents owned magazine. Only 6.25 per cent of the respondents had ownership of internet. It can be inferred that communication media in rural societies are getting due importance too and people are using it for variety of purposes. It can be concluded that the standard of living in rural areas has improved and as a result majority of household had mobile phones, television and radio which are used for various purposes.

Mass media utilization of respondents was measured in terms of frequency of use of different mass media sources for education purpose by the respondents. Television and radio were used on regular basis by majority of the respondents i.e. 100 per cent and 92.50 per cent respondents respectively followed by 18.75 per cent respondents who used newspaper regularly for obtaining information. It was also revealed that on occasional basis mobile, newspaper and magazine were used by 48.75 per cent, 31.25 per cent and 26.25 per cent of the respondents respectively. It can also be concluded that people in rural areas too were using variety of mass media sources for education purpose to a great extent. The most commonly used mass media for education purpose were television, radio and mobile phones.

Use of different formal information sources by respondents was measured in terms of frequency of use of different sources for information by the respondents. The most common interpersonal source used by majority of the respondents (93.75%) on regular basis was friends followed by 73.75 per cent of the respondents who use relatives for seeking information on regular basis. Whereas, successful persons and

external agency were occasionally consulted by 65 per cent and 63.75 per cent of the respondents. The reason might be that in village, the relationship with neighbors and friends was good and they were easily and immediately available to them.

Maximum number of respondents (45%) had membership of one society/ organization followed by no membership (35%). It was found that 20 per cent of the respondents had membership of more than one society/ organization. None of them were office bearer of one or more society/ organization. It can be concluded that despite several opportunities and efforts from government and non-government sectors, people in the sampled area were unable to take optimum benefits through participation in societies/ organizations due to one or another reason.

Knowledge level of the respondents : The present study was focused on to create awareness among members of women SHGs on entrepreneurial skills. The first step in this direction was to assess the existing knowledge level of the respondents regarding entrepreneurial skills.

Table 3. Knowledge level of respondents during pre-test (N=80)

Category	No.	%
Low(<4)	53	66.25
Medium(4 to 9)	19	23.75
High(>9)	8	10.00
Mean : 6.6375	SD: 2.382658	

It is evident from the Table 3 that majority of the respondents (66.25%) had low level of knowledge regarding entrepreneurial skills. While 23.75 per cent respondents had medium level of knowledge. Only ten per cent of the respondents had high knowledge regarding entrepreneurial skills.

Effectiveness of low cost communication package : Table 4 revealed that after exposing the respondents to low cost communication package majority of respondents (56.25%) had medium level of knowledge gained followed by low knowledge level (32.50 per cent). Only 11.25 per cent women respondents had high level of knowledge gain. It can also be observed that very few respondents come under the category of having high knowledge. But there was considerable increase in the number of respondents having medium level of knowledge regarding entrepreneurial skills.

Table 4. Gain in knowledge of respondents during post-test (N=80)

Category	No.	%
Low(<13)	26	32.50
Medium(13 to 21)	45	56.25
High(>21)	9	11.25
Mean: 17.4875;	SD: 3.589696	

Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents in Table 5 reveals that the mean gain score of the respondents on awareness of entrepreneurial skills was 6.64 in pre-test which had increased up to 17.48 in post-test. Thus mean score gain of the respondents in Awareness on entrepreneurial skills was 10.85. This score was significant at five per cent level of significance. This indicates that there was significant difference in gain in knowledge by the respondents due to implementation of the low cost communication package.

Table 5. Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents

Category	Pre-test	Post- test	Mean gain in knowledge
Awareness on Entrepreneurial skills	6.6375	17.4875	10.85*

*Significant at 5 % level of significance

Relationship between socio-economic and communication characteristics with gain in knowledge : The coefficient of correlation was calculated to find the relationship between the socio-economic and communication characteristics with gain in knowledge and the significance of correlation was tested by using t- test.

The results in Table No.6 shows that age, caste, marital status, family type, family size, were negatively and non significantly correlated with the gain in knowledge. Land holding annual income and occupation were positively but non-significantly correlated with the gain in knowledge. Thus, age, caste, marital status, family type, family size, land holding and occupation had no significant relationship with the gain in knowledge.

The data reveals that positive and significant correlation was observed between mass media exposure and gain in knowledge at one per cent level of significance. This indicates that increase in mass media exposure will lead to gain in knowledge. A positive and

significant relationship existed between education and gain in knowledge at one per cent level of significance. It was evident that education played an important role in the case of knowledge gained. It can be concluded that higher the educational level, the more would be the gain in knowledge scores. The significant relationship might be due to the reason that respondents with higher educational level were able to grasp the things quickly and readily. The results of the present study were in conformity with *Chauhan (1999)* and *Yadav (2008)* who reported that education (0.509; 0.336) had significant relationship with gain in knowledge. A positive and significant correlation was observed between information seeking behaviour and gain in knowledge at five per cent level of significance. This indicates that increase in information seeking behavior will lead to gain in knowledge.

Table 6. Relationship between socio-economic and communication characteristics with gain in knowledge of respondents

Variables	"r" values	Cal. t- values
Age	-0.103	-0.919 ^{NS}
Education	0.233**	2.380**
Caste	-0.093	-0.827 ^{NS}
Marital status	-0.167	-1.497 ^{NS}
Family type	-0.137	-1.226 ^{NS}
Family size	-0.126	-1.128 ^{NS}
Land holdings	0.005	0.048 ^{NS}
Occupation	0.107	0.955 ^{NS}
Annual income	0.029	0.261 ^{NS}
Mass media exposure	0.358**	2.683**
Information seeking behavior	0.193*	1.817*
Social participation	0.187*	1.738*

NS= Non-significant

*Significant at 5 % level of significance;

**Significant at 1 % level of significance

t- value at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance (df =78) = 1.6646 and 2.3751

It was further observed that there existed a positive and significant relationship between social participation and gain in knowledge at five per cent level of significance. This implies that more socially active a respondent is, more will be the gain in knowledge. The results of the present study were in line with the observation of *Yadav (2008)* who reported that social participation (0.486) had significant relationship with gain in knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities would ensure an effective utilization of labor, generation of income and hence improvement in quality of life. It is realized by all nations that mobilizing women to take up entrepreneurial activities can ensure social and economic changes. The development of any nation depends primarily on the important role played by entrepreneurs as well as on the development of women. Thus, in all economic development activities more attention is being given to entrepreneurship development especially among women. The present study showed that context and need based messages could produce strong effects when tuned with the perception, preferences and information need of the audiences. It implies that the selected low

cost communication package had helped the women entrepreneurs under Self-help groups to gain and enrich their knowledge regarding entrepreneurial skills.

On the basis of findings, it is recommended that need based information on other aspects related to entrepreneurial skills will prove to be effective for women in hills, if proper communication strategy is adopted. It is also recommended that the low cost communication package prepared and used for the present investigation can be replicated and administered to the similar socio-economic groups. This study on developing communication package for enhancing awareness on women entrepreneurial skills is of immense help in planning and conducting programmes for entrepreneurship development among women.

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