

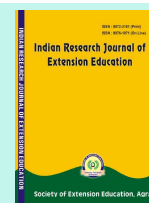


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Information Needs and Information Support Services of Women Entrepreneurs in Telangana State

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship plays an essential role in stimulating the economic growth and generating employment opportunities. Information is required to establish and effective running of an enterprise. The present study was aimed at find out information needs and information support services among women entrepreneurs. The study was conducted in three districts of Telangana state i.e Adilabad, Sangareddy and Rangareddy districts. A total of 180 respondents constituted the sample of the study. Data was collected through structured schedule and scale. The results found that most of the women entrepreneurs need technical information need and managerial information needs. The results also revealed that majority (54.44%) of the respondents had medium level information support services followed by low (23.89%) and high (21.67%) level information support services. Correlation analysis of information support services with independent variables revealed that education, annual income, socio-economic status, extension support, information seeking behaviour, mass media contact and ICT usage showed a positive significant relationship.

Key words: Women entrepreneurs; Information needs; Information support services; information seeking behaviour.

Information is required to establish and effective running of an enterprise. Information needs are a form of activity to solve problems or to make decisions (Faibisoff and Ely, 1974). Information and communication are two basic tools needed for entrepreneurial activity. Information was needed by entrepreneurs to make right decisions and to reduce uncertainty (Yusuf, 2012). Unlimited access of information provides economic growth and social engagement through critical thinking and ingenuity (Huyer and Hafkin, 2007). Lack of information exposure to formal sources gives out dated, incomplete and inaccurate information as a result entrepreneurs may lose many opportunities provided by the officials regarding enterprises. Women entrepreneurs needed information on the market prices, competition, legal aspects, technical information needs etc. But women entrepreneurs facing challenges in accessing

information needs because lack of awareness, illiteracy, gender bias, lack of facilities. Yohana (2016) found that the information is needed to make a plan and start a business by entrepreneurs. Recent advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) provided several opportunities to the women entrepreneurs. Accessing information using modern communication technologies like mobile phones, internet, social media networks, proper training and awareness to entrepreneurs are the key solutions to provide information to the entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

The “Ex post facto” research design was used for the study. The study was conducted in three districts of Telangana state i.e Adilabad, Sangareddy and Rangareddy districts. From each district 60 respondents were selected, thus a total of 180 respondents were

selected purposefully. The data were collected by personal interview method with the help of interview schedule to elicit first-hand information on information needs of women entrepreneurs. The interview schedule was prepared on five point continuum with judgement strongly important, important, fairly important, not important and strongly not important with 5,4,3,2 and 1. The maximum mean score that could be obtained in each area of information need could be 5.00. For information support services a scale was developed and validated for the study. Each statement was noted on a five-point continuum as Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and strongly disagree with scores of 5,4,3,2 and 1. The collected data were recorded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.0 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information needs and information support services of women entrepreneurs in three districts were collected and presented AS follows.

Information needs of women entrepreneurs : The identified information needs of the women entrepreneurs fall under three main areas i.e. managerial, legal and technical. The respondents were studied to identify and analyse the information needs.

It was observed from the Table 1 that, under managerial information need majority of the respondent’s considered information on their competitors as most important need with the mean score of 4.52 and ranked first followed by marketing & advertising with mean score of 4.48 and ranked second, current market trends with mean score of 4.45 and ranked third and business plan with mean score of 4.32 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.28 for book keeping & budgeting and ranked fifth. Considering legal information need, majority of the respondents considered loans available for enterprises as most important need with the mean score of 4.48 and ranked first followed by Govt. Programme/schemes with mean score of 4.45 and ranked second, licensing with mean score of 4.41 and ranked third and Taxation with mean score of 3.38 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 3.23 for Govt. rules and regulations and ranked fifth.

Under technical information need, majority of the respondents considered trainings programmes to enhance their technical skills as most important need

Table 1. Information needs of women entrepreneurs of Adilabad district (n1=60)

Type of information need	Mean	Rank	Overall MS	Overall rank
<i>Managerial information needs</i>				
Book keeping and budgeting	4.28	V		
Competitors	4.52	I		
Marketing & Advertising	4.48	II	4.41	II
Business plan	4.32	IV		
Marketing trends	4.45	III		
<i>Legal information needs</i>				
Licensing	4.41	III		
Govt. schemes	4.45	II		
Loans	4.48	I	3.99	III
Govt. rules and regulations	3.23	V		
Taxation	3.38	IV		
<i>Technical information needs</i>				
New technologies	4.60	III		
ICT usage	4.62	II		
Social media management	4.52	IV	4.51	I
Microsoft Office	4.15	V		
Technical training programmes	4.65	I		

with the mean score of 4.65 and ranked first followed by ICT usage with mean score of 4.62 and ranked second, new technologies related to their enterprises with mean score of 4.60 and ranked third and Social media management with mean score of 4.52 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.15 for Microsoft Office software and ranked fifth.

It could be observed from the Table 1 that technical information need was found to be higher compared to other two domains. The overall mean score for technical need was found 4.51 which was ranked as first followed by managerial need with 4.41 overall mean score and legal information need with 3.99 overall mean score which were ranked second and third respectively.

From the results it was found that respondents had more need in area of technology this might be the reason that they lacked technical knowledge to use a computer and mobile applications than other two domains i.e managerial and legal information need.

It could be indicated from Table 2 that, under managerial information need majority of the respondent's considered information on their competitors as most important with the mean score of 4.58 and ranked first followed by current market trends with mean score of 4.28 and ranked second, business plan with mean score of 4.26 and ranked third and marketing & advertising with mean score of 4.18 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.17 for book keeping & budgeting and ranked fifth. Under legal information need, majority of the respondents considered loans available for enterprises as most important need with the mean score of 4.32 and ranked first followed by licensing with mean score of 4.27 and second, Taxation with mean score of 4.26 and ranked third, Govt. Programme/schemes with mean score of 4.23

Table 2. Information needs of women entrepreneurs of Sangareddy district (n=60)

Type of information need	Mean	Rank	Overall MS	Overall rank
<i>Managerial information needs</i>				
Book keeping and budgeting	4.17	V		
Competitors	4.58	I		
Marketing & Advertising	4.18	IV	4.29	II
Business plan	4.26	III		
Current marketing trends	4.28	II		
<i>Legal information needs</i>				
Licensing	4.27	II		
Govt. Programme/schemes	4.23	IV		
Loans	4.32	I	4.24	III
Govt. rules and regulations	4.12	V		
Taxation	4.26	III		
<i>Technical information needs</i>				
New technologies	4.38	IV		
ICT usage	4.52	I		
Social media management	4.45	III	4.43	I
Microsoft Office	4.36	V		
Tech.training programmes	4.46	II		

and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.12 for Govt. rules and regulations and ranked fifth. Under technical information need, majority of the respondents considered ICT usage as most important with the mean score of 4.52 and ranked first followed by trainings programmes to enhance technical skills with mean score of 4.46 and ranked second, Social media management with mean score 4.45 and ranked third and new technologies with mean score of 4.38 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.15 for Microsoft Office software and ranked fifth. It could be observed from the Table 2 that technical information need was found to be higher compared to other two domains. The overall mean score for technical information need was found 4.43 which was ranked as first followed by managerial need with 4.29 overall mean score and legal information need with 4.24 overall mean score which were ranked second and third respectively.

From the results it was clearly seen that respondents had more need in area of technology this might be the reason that they lacked technical knowledge to use a computer and mobile applications than other two domains i.e managerial and legal information need.

It was observed from the Table 3 that, under managerial information need, majority of the respondents considered information on their competitors as most important with the mean score of 4.37 and ranked first followed by current market trends with mean score of 4.24 and ranked second, book keeping & budgeting with mean score of 4.13 and ranked third and business plan with mean score of 4.08 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.01 for marketing & advertising and ranked fifth.

Under legal information need, majority of the respondents considered tax information need as most important with the mean score of 4.28 and ranked first followed by loans with mean score of 4.24 and ranked second, licensing with mean score of 4.22 and ranked third and Govt. Programme/schemes with mean score of 4.20 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.12 for Govt. rules and regulations and ranked fifth.

Under technical information need, majority of the

Table 3. Information needs of women entrepreneurs of Rangareddy district (n=60)

Type of information need	Mean	Rank	Overall MS	Overall rank
<i>Managerial information needs</i>				
Book keeping and budgeting	4.13	III	4.17	III
Competitors	4.37	I		
Marketing & Advertising	4.01	V		
Business plan	4.08	IV		
Marketing trends	4.24	II		
<i>Legal information needs</i>				
Licensing	4.22	III	4.21	II
Govt. schemes	4.20	IV		
Loans	4.24	II		
Govt. rules and regulations	4.12	V		
Taxation	4.28	I		
<i>Technical information needs</i>				
New technologies	4.18	IV	4.24	I
ICT usage	4.22	III		
Social media management	4.38	I		
Microsoft Office	4.24	II		
Tech.training Prog.	4.16	V		

respondents considered social media management as most important need with mean score of 4.38 and ranked first followed by Microsoft office with mean score of 4.24 second, ICT usage with mean score of 4.22 and ranked third and new technologies with mean score of 4.18 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.16 for trainings programmes to enhance technical skills and ranked fifth.

It was found from the results that technical information need was found to be higher compared to other two domains. The overall mean score for technical need was found 4.24 which was ranked as first followed by legal information need with 4.21 overall mean score and managerial information need with 4.17 overall mean score which were ranked second and third respectively.

Table 4 indicated total population mean score. It was observed from the Table 4 that, under managerial information need majority of the respondent’s considered information on their competitors as most important with the mean score of 4.49 and ranked first followed

by current market trends with mean score of 4.32 and ranked second, business plan with mean score of 4.22 and marketing & advertising with mean score of 4.22 and ranked third. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.19 for book keeping & budgeting and ranked fourth.

Under legal information need, majority of the respondents considered loans available for enterprises as most important need with the mean score of 4.35 and ranked first followed by licensing with mean score of 4.30 and ranked second, Govt. Programme/schemes with mean score of 4.29 and ranked third and Taxation with mean score of 3.97 and ranked fourth. The lowest mean score recorded was 3.82 for Govt. rules and regulations and ranked fifth. Under technical information need, majority of the respondents considered ICT usage and social media management with mean score of 4.45 as most important needs and ranked first followed by trainings programmes to enhance technical skills with mean score of 4.42 and ranked second and new technologies with mean score of 4.39 and ranked third. The lowest mean score recorded was 4.25 for Microsoft

Table 4. Information needs of women entrepreneurs (N=180)

Type of information need	Mean	Rank	Overall MS	Overall rank
<i>Managerial information needs</i>				
Book keeping and budgeting	4.19	IV	4.29	II
Competitors	4.49	I		
Marketing & Advertising	4.22	III		
Business plan	4.22	III		
Marketing trends	4.32	II		
<i>Legal information needs</i>				
Licensing	4.30	II	4.15	III
Govt. schemes	4.29	III		
Loans	4.35	I		
Govt. rules and regulations	3.82	V		
Taxation	3.97	IV		
<i>Technical information needs</i>				
New technologies	4.39	III	4.39	I
ICT usage	4.45	I		
Social media management	4.45	I		
Microsoft Office	4.25	IV		
Tech.training programmes	4.42	II		

office and ranked fourth.

It was found from the results that technical information need was found to be higher compared to other two domains. The overall mean score for technical need was found 4.39 which was ranked as first followed by managerial information need with 4.29 overall mean score and legal information need with 4.15 overall mean score which were ranked second and third respectively. The results indicated that respondents had more need in area of technology than other two domains.

The information need table clearly reveals that technical information needs were the top information need expressed by the women entrepreneurs and they were eager to learn new technologies. This might be reason that in rural areas and small towns' information technology or ICTs information about enterprises is not very common, this gap allows them to suffer from lack of information, lack of training and lack of technical knowledge. They felt that ICTs training would help them to become information rich and can perform entrepreneurial activities effectively by using all the social media platforms. Some of them were interested to learn Microsoft office as well to prepare budget sheets, reports etc. Discussion with women entrepreneurs revealed that they also needed managerial information needs as to about their possible competitors, to know about current market trends and advertising and marketing their products. Some of the respondents little interest towards legal information needs. They wanted information on the loans, licensing, schemes and programmes. Hence, more concentration should be given to training programmes to enhance their technical skills and to remove these barriers. *Chaudhary and Kameswari (2015)* found that rural women entrepreneurs needed managerial and technical needs.

Information support systems of women entrepreneurs : Information, in a broad context, refers to organized data recorded in various forms and is a raw source for knowledge. Information is very valuable to the

entrepreneurs, if is provided by right time, using right channels, and is reliable. The respondents were classified into low, medium and high categories based on their scores. The distribution is given in the Table 5.

From the above Table 5 it was observed from Adilabad district that, majority of the respondents (48.33%) had medium level information support services followed by low (31.67%) and high (20.00%) level information support services.

Considering Sangareddy district, majority of the respondents (55.00%) had medium level information support services followed by high (23.33%) and low (21.67%) level information support services.

Further in Rangareddy district, majority of the respondents (60.00%) had medium level information support services followed by high (21.67%) and low (18.33%) level information support services.

It could be seen from summarizing the total sample that, majority of the respondents i.e. 54.44 per cent had medium level information support services followed by low (23.89%) and high (21.67%) level information support services.

It was witnessed from the results that respondents own mobile phones and mainly used maintaining contacts and for entertainment purpose. Majority of women used television for entertainment and getting information. While mobile phones were mainly used for enterprise purpose; they were making audio calls, video calls to the customers and wholesalers. Some of the respondents felt that mobile phones were helped them to learn new things through different mobile applications. Newspaper, magazine and radio were found to be used for entertainment purpose. It was also found that the respondents fetch information about their enterprises from progressive entrepreneurs, wholesalers or manufacturers, friends and relatives. This may be the reason that most of the respondents had medium level of information support services. *Chowdary (2015)*

Information support services	Adilabad (n1=60)		Sangareddy (n2=60)		Rangareddy (n3=60)		Total (N=180)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low	19	31.67	13	21.67	11	18.33	43	23.89
Medium	29	48.33	33	55.00	36	60.00	98	54.44
High	12	20.00	14	23.33	13	21.67	39	21.67

Table 6. Relationship of independent variables with information support services

Independent variables	'r' value			Total (N=180)
	Adilabad (n1=60)	Sangareddy (n2=60)	Rangareddy (n3=60)	
Age	.100	.035	.137	.102
Education	.378**	.364**	.402**	.374**
Annual income	.302*	.023	.302*	.355**
Socio-economic status	.057	.158	.447**	.255**
Extension support	.264*	.326*	.019	.148*
Information seeking behaviour	.110	.112	.367**	.235**
Mass media contact	.317*	.160	.525**	.258**
ICT Usage	.054	.097	.302*	.304**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

found that radio, television, newspaper and mobile phone were used regularly by women entrepreneurs. Interpersonal sources like friends and neighbours were the most common sources of information for women entrepreneurs to get information. *Afrah and Fabiha (2017)* mentioned that mobile phones, SMS, e-mail and Internet-based telephony (such as Skype) were mostly used by women entrepreneurs to correspond with customers, business associates and partners.

And they also found that the use of a mobile phone was allowed women entrepreneurs to save time on travel, expand outreach, receive orders and in some cases transfer money. *Basunathe and Tripathi (2017)* reported that majority of the respondents were possessed with television and mobile phones for gain information on the agriculture. *Oinam et al. (2019)* revealed that most of the rural youth farmers were seek information through friends, neighbours and mobile phones and the study also found that respondents chosen market price information need as top priority.

The 'r' value obtained from multiple correlation analysis of independent variable with information support services is presented in Table 6. It revealed that in Adilabad district, three variables viz., education, annual income, extension support and mass media contact showed a positive significant relationship with information support services. Education was found to be significant at 0.01 level of probability while annual income and extension support were significant at .005 level of probability. In Sangareddy district; education and extension support showed a positive significant relationship with information support services at 0.01 level of probability. Further in Rangareddy district,

education, annual income, socio-economic status, information seeking behaviour, mass media contact and ICT usage found to be a positive significant relationship with information support services.

It could be concluded from the Table 6 that, out of the total population comprising in three districts; education, annual income, socio-economic status, extension support, information seeking behaviour, mass media contact and ICT usage showed a positive significant relationship with information support services.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that most of the women entrepreneurs felt that they needed technical and managerial information to run their enterprises effectively. The study also found information support services available to women entrepreneurs. The results found that majority of the women entrepreneurs were had medium level of information services. Efforts for increased awareness and knowledge through various innovative extension methods should be conducted for the target group to enhance information services to them. The study also found that education, annual income, socio-economic status, extension support, information seeking behaviour, mass media contact and ICT usage showed a positive significant relationship with information support services. Age was found to be had non-significant relationship with information support services.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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