

ANALYSIS OF GENDER SPECIFIC SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING HOME AND FARM PRACTICES IN POTOHAR REGION: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to analyze the gender specific sources of information regarding home and farm practices in Potohar Region. A cross sectional survey research design was used for the study and multistage random sampling process was used. The collected data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was found that for females, television followed by friends, relatives, radio and local farmers were their most frequently used sources of information. For males, the most frequent sources of information were local farmers and relatives followed by friends, television and radio. Female respondents trust more on the information provided by television followed by friends, relatives and radio. On the other hand, male order of trust on the information falls in decreasing order as local farmers followed by relatives, friends, television and radio. The information sources like inputs/output dealers, books/booklets and extension agent were considered the least trust worthy by both the male and female respondents. It is, therefore, suggested that information ministry to educate their spectators on practicing gender equality and mutual consultation on household, community and livelihood strategies related issues through TV talks, dramas, serials and other shows at national and international channels. Print media of the country are also further suggested to present the case of gender equality in a more strong and convincing manner through their programs and articles.

Key Words: Gender specific sources, print and electronic media, home and farm practices, Potohar.

INTRODUCTION

Information may be defined as organized data of ideas or skills that were served as raw resource for knowledge (Ochieng, 2003) and was a missing link in the rural women's attainment of their self-determination as identified by researchers. The sources of information are divided into two categories, one was conventional and other was non-conventional or modern. The conventional methods include personal contact methods and modern constituted the electronic methods (Cheema, 2000).

For the generation of effective and valid results, the effective use of various sources of information is essential. These sources are useful in obtaining information that relates to crops cultivation practices, land development, pesticides, diseases control details, marketing details and many other functions. Unfortunately, rural areas usually lag behind urban areas in their access to information and developing countries are generally deprived more than developed countries in this regard. Such lags jeopardize the ability of rural people to realize their full potential and improve their economic, social and environmental conditions (Alex *et al.*, 2002). The dream of rural development can not become true until both the genders earn profit from these sources and relevant information. Female crop farmers' experienced greater problems in accessing agricultural

information (Adomi *et al.*, 2003). There has been little research done on women information needs and access to appropriate information in developing countries. The 'information highway' is still predominantly male-oriented and often a forum for gender discrimination and intimidation (Huyer, 1997).

In Pakistan mainly work was done for male farmers' side and different masters level studies showed that male farmers in general utilizes sources like fellow farmers, friends, pesticide dealers and extension workers of Agriculture Department. In case of audio visual aids, radio and TV were the main sources of information. However, a lesser number of male farmers utilized grey matter (Nazam, 2000; Cheema, 2000; Barkat, 2002).

All the extension activities were directed only towards the male farmers and not a single institute present to provide knowledge and training about the various aspects of agriculture and home management, which totally corner the women in dissemination of desired information. They were unable to get benefit from any major source of information, however, they shared any type of information with their female relatives or a negligible number may share with their husbands. In these hostile conditions how it is possible to gear up the process of development by neglecting half of the population of country. Therefore, a study was conducted to analyze the gender specific sources of information regarding home and farm practices in Potohar Region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Chakwal lies in the sub-tropical region and its climate is typical of the area, with the exception that it varies a little on the cooler side, owing to its elevation, from central Punjab. Chakwal district lies between 71° - 48' to 73° - 16' east longitude and 32° - 33' to 33° - 12' north latitudes (Govt. of Pakistan, 2000). Chakwal lies at the beginning of the Pothwar plateau and the Salt Range. It is a barani district and the terrain is mainly hilly, covered with scrub forest in the south-west and leveled plains interspaced with dry rocky and patches in the north-east. The total area of Chakwal district is 6524 km² (Government of Pakistan, 2008). Chakwal is the third most-populated district of barani Potohar, having the lowest population density of 166.1 persons per km². More than 53% of district population resides in urban areas (Govt. of Punjab, 2000). District Chakwal, being one of the prominent districts in Potohar region was selected as the universe of the present investigation.

A cross sectional survey research design was used to study and analyze gender specific sources of information regarding home and farm practices. A multistage random sampling process was used for this research study. Two tehsils out of four were selected by employing simple random sampling technique. Afterwards five villages were selected randomly from the selected two tehsils and twenty households (farming and non-farming families) of each village were further selected by using systematic random sampling technique. A married couple from the selected households was selected as respondents and total 400 respondents (200 rural women and 200 rural men) were interviewed. The data were collected through pre-tested interview schedule survey. The collected data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Moreover, the data were analyzed by calculating simple frequencies, percentages, means and chi-square distribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sources of Information: The respondents were asked their sources of information about day to day developments in the areas of crop, livestock and household management. For family females, television followed by friends, relatives, radio and local farmers were their most frequently used sources of information. For males, the most frequent sources of information were local farmers and relatives followed by friends, television and radio. Sources of information, like inputs/output dealers, books/booklets and extension workers were the least frequent sources of information for both the males and female respondents in the study area (Table 1). Statistically significant gender based differences were observed for majority of the information sources. This implies that both partners use these sources in significantly different manner. It could also entails that information sources act differently towards persuading female participation in farm planning as well as improving gender equality perceptions in the rural society. In this way, our findings do confirms the line of action of information sources towards gender involvement and gender equality poles.

Reliability of information provided by various information sources plays important role in building reputé among their clients as well as sustainability of long-term integrity of the source of information under consideration. The information gathered from respondents about the reliability of the information provided by various sources was gauged using Likert scale. It was found that female respondents trust more on the information provided by television followed by friends, relatives and radio. On the other hand, male order of trust on the information falls in decreasing order as local farmers followed by relatives, friends, television and radio. Again the information sources like inputs/output dealers, books/booklets and extension agent were considered the least trust worthy by both the male and female respondents. All the sources of information

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their specific source of information

Sources of information	Wife respondents (n=200)		Husband respondents (n=200)		χ^2 -value	Sig. level
	Yes (#)	Yes (%)	Yes (#)	Yes (%)		
Television	150	75.0	124	62.0	7.832	0.005
Friends	135	67.5	133	66.5	0.045	0.832
Relatives	122	61.0	146	73.0	6.513	0.011
Radio	78	39.0	109	54.5	9.651	0.002
Local farmers	74	37.0	146	73.0	52.364	0.000
Newspapers/magazines	48	24.0	74	37.0	7.973	0.005
Inputs/output dealers	46	23.0	69	34.5	6.456	0.011
Books / Booklets	40	20.0	50	25.0	1.434	0.231
Extension workers of the govt.	36	18.0	69	34.5	14.063	0.000

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to the Reliability of Information Provided

Information sources	Wife respondents (n=200)				Husband respondents (n=200)				X ² -value	Sig. level
	No	Low	Medium	High	No	Low	Medium	High		
Television	50 (25.0)	7 (3.5)	43 (21.5)	100 (50.0)	76 (38.0)	2 (1.0)	59 (29.5)	63 (31.5)	19.051	0.000
Friends	65 (32.5)	14 (7.0)	23 (11.5)	98 (49.0)	67 (33.5)	1 (0.5)	58 (29.0)	74 (37.0)	29.769	0.000
Relatives	78 (39.0)	11 (5.5)	28 (14.0)	83 (41.5)	54 (27.0)	1 (0.5)	63 (31.5)	82 (41.0)	26.165	0.000
Radio	122 (61.0)	7 (3.5)	21 (10.5)	50 (25.0)	91 (45.5)	2 (1.0)	46 (23.0)	61 (30.5)	17.708	0.001
Local farmers	126 (63.0)	8 (4.0)	18 (9.0)	48 (24.0)	54 (27.0)	-	60 (30.0)	86 (43.0)	70.192	0.000
Newspapers/magazines	152 (76.0)	4 (2.0)	20 (10.0)	24 (12.0)	126 (63.0)	4 (2.0)	39 (19.5)	31 (15.5)	9.441	0.024
Dealers	154 (77.0)	5 (2.5)	18 (9.0)	23 (11.5)	131 (65.5)	-	42 (21.0)	27 (13.5)	16.776	0.001
Books / Booklets	160 (80.0)	6 (3.0)	11 (5.5)	23 (11.5)	150 (75.0)	-	34 (17.0)	16 (8.0)	19.335	0.000
Extension workers of government	164 (82.0)	5 (2.5)	19 (9.5)	12 (6.0)	131 (65.5)	1 (0.5)	43 (21.5)	25 (12.5)	20.216	0.000

Figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage

Table 3: Ranking by Mean Scores about Reliability of Specific Sources Information

Information sources	Wife respondents (n=200)			Husband respondents (n=200)			Sig. level
	Mean ¹	Standard Deviation	Ranking order	Mean ¹	Standard Deviation	Ranking order	
Television	1.97	1.24	1	1.55	1.28	4	0.001
Friends	1.77	1.35	2	1.70	1.28	3	0.568
Relatives	1.58	1.36	3	1.87	1.22	2	0.028
Radio	0.94	1.30	5	1.89	1.23	1	0.000
Local farmers	1.00	1.31	4	1.39	1.33	5	0.003
Newspapers/magazines	0.58	1.08	6	0.88	1.20	6	0.010
Dealers	0.55	1.06	7	0.83	1.18	7	0.014
Books / Booklets	0.40	0.89	9	0.81	1.16	8	0.000
Extension workers of government	0.49	1.03	8	0.58	1.03	9	0.357

were statistically highly significant across gender among the respondents (Table 2). This further confirms our observation on gender based differences in action of different information sources. It can be concluded that except radio and television, the localized sources of information were considered to be more trust worthy in the study area whereas more authentic sources like books/booklets and extension agents receives the least consideration may be due to low level of education and lack of practicability in the information provided by these sources. These results are in conformity with the findings of the Alerx *et al.* (2002), Adomi *et al.* (2003) and Manohari (2002) that males used to trust more on friends for acquiring information as compared to women, where as women used to depend on television and radio.

Ranking the results reported in Table 2 on the basis of means score further broadly confirmed the findings presented in table 3. It was found that on wives' part; TV information is the most reliable followed by friends, relatives, local farmers, radio, newspaper, inputs dealers, extension agents and books/magazines. On the other hand, husband respondents awarded the highest score to radio followed by relatives, friends, television, local farmers, inputs dealers, books and extension workers. The differences in scores awarded by husbands and wives to various information sources were highly significant ($P < 0.01$) except for friends and extension workers. These results are in line with the findings of Encanto *et al.* (1999); Nazam, (2000); Cheema, (2000); Barkat, (2002); Rivera and Qamar (2003) that women

were more inclined to TV for information and other entertainment programmes where as men were interested to listen for the same purpose.

Conclusion

For females, television followed by friends, relatives, radio and local farmers were their most frequently used sources of information. Female respondents trust more on the information provided by television followed by friends, relatives and radio. Male order of trust on the information falls in decreasing order as local farmers followed by relatives, friends, television and radio. For males, the most frequent sources of information were local farmers and relatives followed by friends, television and radio. The information sources like inputs/output dealers, books/booklets and extension agent were considered the least trust worthy by both the male and female respondents.

FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

- i. As the use of television have been reported as quite high by our male and female respondents, therefore, the information ministries are suggested to educate their spectators on practicing gender equality and mutual consultation on household, community and livelihood strategies related issues through TV talks, dramas, serials and other shows at national and international channels.
- ii. Print media of the country are further suggested to present the case of gender equality in a more strong and convincing manner through their programs and articles.

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Information sources on sweet potato cropping were numerous, with both farmers's own experience and friends or relatives (8.3 and 40.0% for male- and female-headed households, respectively) being equally the most common. Gender of household heads, as revealed in a study conducted in Ethiopia [11], influenced participation in governmental extension programs, with male-headed households taking dominance (75%). Factors such as age, farm size, religion, education level and income were reported to have a significant effect on accessibility to extension services by women [12]. Gender disparity in access to off-farm income has been reported for rural households in Mexico [34]. This paper analyses the socio-economic effects of hurricane Mitch using a gender approach and proposes new analysis indicators for crisis situations that may better reflect women's disadvantageous position relative to men. The first section of the document discusses key concepts used in gender and disaster analysis, in the context of the region and hurricane Mitch. The concept of vulnerability takes into account people and the differences among them; in other words, it facilitates analysis of the social situation, affirming that people's circumstances change and can be changed, in this case, by an event such as a hurricane.