

## **THE CREDIBILITY OF VARIOUS SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON HUMAN NUTRITION**

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Adoption of improved food habits in rural areas is considered as an important method of combating community nutrition problems. For this, information about new food practices are provided to the village women by different communication sources. But the potency of success or failure of communication depends upon the nature of its source, recipients, perception of its intent and a host of other factors (Bettinghans, 1968). Credibility of a source encompass these. The information source credibility is the degree to which a communication source or channel is perceived as trust-worthy and competent by the receiver (Rogers, 1971). Credibility of information source largely decides the acceptance or rejection of an innovation advocated by that source (Singh and Shankariah, 1968). Further, it has been proposed from laboratory experiment studies in communication that an individual's attitude change is also positively related to credibility with which he perceives the source (or channel!) of persuasive messages (Rogers, 1971).

In view of the above, the present study was conducted (i) to find out the communication source utilisation by village women (ii) to determine the differential source credibility perception of village women and (iii) to find out the effect of socio-economic and personal characteristics on the source credibility perception of village women.

### **Materials and Methods**

The present study was undertaken in the NES Blocks in Trivandrum District, Kerala.

**Selection of sources of information on food and nutrition:** In a pilot study, 11 information sources namely (1) radio (2) news papers (3) magazines (4) friends (5) camps (6) relatives (7) neighbours (8) block personnel (9) mahila-samajams (10) teaching institutions and (11) films were selected as the source of information generally used by village women to obtain information on food and nutrition.

**Selection of respondents:** One hundred village women were selected from the NES Blocks in Trivandrum District, Kerala using random sampling method. Only those who had participated in the camps conducted on Applied Nutrition

were selected. Data were collected by personal interview with the help of a structured schedule.

**Measuring source credibility:** The source credibility was measured by multiplying the frequency of each source by respective weightages. Weightages awarded were 4, 3, 2, 1 for most credible, credible and not credible and least credible respectively (Beal *et al.* 1960).

For finding out the effect of socio-economic and personal characters, "Chisquare" which is an index of dispersion of the observed frequencies from those expected was applied.

### Results and Discussion

#### Communication source utilisation by Village women

To communicate scientific information on food and nutrition to the village women effectively, it is very essential that we identify the different sources which are generally utilised by the village women. The study revealed that there is differential utilisation of communication sources by the village women. Details regarding the utilisation of communication sources and source credibility of various information sources are presented in Table 1. The village women have selective utilisation of existing communication sources. Radio ranks first in the source

**Table 1**

#### Effect of communication sources and source credibility

| Sources                          | Total Rank Score | General Credibility mean |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Radio                            | 72               | 0.76                     |
| Mahilasamajams                   | 67               | 0.80                     |
| Block Personal                   | 65               | 0.87                     |
| Camps                            | 56               | 0.81                     |
| Magazines and other publications | 40               | 0.66                     |
| News paper                       | 33               | 0.56                     |
| Friends                          | 29               | 0.61                     |
| Neighbours                       | 28               | 0.64                     |
| Relatives                        | 27               | 0.61                     |
| Teaching Institutions            | 27               | 0.69                     |
| Films                            | 21               | 0.69                     |

utilisation pattern of village women. But another mass medium, namely films ranks last. This is probably due to the less frequent exposure of the clientele to this mass medium than the radio. Mahilasamajams rank second in this respect closely followed by block personnel. The rank obtained by A. N. P. Camps in this respect is only 4th, though 83% of the respondents live in ANP blocks and 81% have participated in ANP camps. This suggests that there is possibility to make this source more popular. Though more than 70% (Table 2) of the respon-

Table 2

## Socio-economic and personal characteristics of respondents

| Characteristics | Groups (N = 100)             |                    |                    |                      |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
|                 | Employed<br>12               |                    | House Wives<br>88  |                      |
| Occupation      | <i>U. P. S. School level</i> |                    | <i>H. S. level</i> |                      |
| Education       | 9                            | 19                 | 53                 | 19                   |
|                 | <i>Upto Rs. 349</i>          | <i>Rs. 350-699</i> | <i>700-1250</i>    | <i>above Rs. 125</i> |
| Income (Annual) | 40                           | 31                 | 10                 | 19                   |
|                 | <i>Below 25</i>              | <i>26-35</i>       | <i>36-45</i>       |                      |
| Age             | 29                           | 40                 | 31                 |                      |

dents have education upto and above High School level, the print media are not favoured by them. Magazines rank only 5th in the source utilisation pattern while news papers rank only 6th. This indicates that the potentiality of these sources is yet to be tapped fully and that there is possibility for making use of these sources in information communication more effectively. Interpersonal communication sources such as friends, neighbours and relatives have only low ranks (7th, 8th and 9th respectively) in the source utilisation by village women. Probably these informal sources are not very effective due to their inability to provide information involving technical know-how; yet these are very effective sources of information at different stages of adoption, especially at deliberation, trial and evaluation stages (Dasgupta and Bhagath, 1976). Therefore, it is particularly important that efforts be made to make the village women utilise these sources. Of the 11 sources utilised by the village women, teaching institutions like Agricultural College, Homescience College etc., are on a par with relatives. This indicates the need for more intensive effort on the part of these institutions to make their services available to the village women.

It is clear that Block personnel, training camps, mahilasamajams and radio are highly credible sources. High credibility is also placed on the informal information sources like friends, neighbours, and relatives by the respondents. Among

the various information sources, newspaper is the least credible source. It may be seen that the source utilisation pattern and the credibility in respect of Blocks mahilasamajams and radio are high. In the case of news papers both are on the low side. Though the credibility is high as far as relatives, friends etc. are concerned the utilisation of these sources are very poor. Therefore, these sources deserve more attention.

### Socio-economic and personal characteristics and their relationship to credibility.

The differential utilisation and credibility of the respondents to different information sources may be due to the interplay of several personal and economic factors. Personal characteristics like age, education and occupation, social characteristics like participation in training camps, Block activities, activities of mahilasamajams and training institutions and economic status were the various factors

**Table 3**

### The influence of economic and personal characteristics on the source credibility

|                       | Age            | Income         | Education      | Occupation     |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Block Personnel       | 26.49<br>(.21) | 7.83           | 12.60<br>(.11) | 18.16<br>(.15) |
| ANP camps             | 21.85<br>(.18) | 28.81<br>(.22) | 18.5<br>(.15)  | 15.68<br>(.14) |
| Mahilasamajams        | 29.18<br>(.23) | 99.75<br>(.5)  | 10.25          | 18.16<br>(.15) |
| Radio                 | 45.39<br>(.31) | 20.59<br>(.17) | 54.02<br>(.35) | 2.75           |
| News paper            | 11.85          | 91.72<br>(.48) | 21.24<br>(.18) | 24.59<br>(.2)  |
| Teaching Institutions | 41.85<br>(.3)  | 14.13<br>(.12) | 22.35<br>(.18) | 0.94           |
| Films                 | 31.86<br>(.24) | 30.14<br>(.23) | 5.31           | 0.76           |
| Magazines             | 9.03           | 51.24<br>(.34) | 17.85<br>(.15) | 5.77           |
| Neighbours            | 22.42<br>(.18) | 10.87          | 11.37          | 1.83           |
| Friends               | 43.789<br>(.3) | 28.94<br>(.22) | 25.88<br>(.21) | 5.36           |
| Relatives             | 10.86          | 20.21<br>(.17) | 8.64           | 15.50<br>(.14) |

studied. Various socio-economic and personal characteristics studied are presented in Table 3.

Majority of the respondents are middle aged, fairly educated housewives belonging to low income groups. Their participation in other social activities was also studied; 81% participated in ANP camps, 37% in Block activities, 56% in mahilasamajams, 83% were residents in ANP Blocks and 32% were visiting educational institutions and 13% were members in social organisations outside villages. The influence of economic and personal characteristics on the source credibility are given in Table 3.

Age is not a discriminating factor in the use of various information sources. Significant relationships are found except in the case of news papers,

**Table 4**

**The influence of Social characteristics on the source credibility**

|                       | Participation<br>in block<br>activities | Participation<br>in teaching<br>institution<br>activities | Participation<br>in voluntary<br>organisation<br>activities | Residents<br>of ANP/<br>Non-ANP<br>Blocks | Membership<br>in organi-<br>sations out-<br>side the<br>village | Partici-<br>pation<br>in ANP<br>Camps |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Block personnel       | 133.19<br>(.57)                         | 5.86  | 20.79<br>(.17)  | 42.24<br>(.3)                             | 12.23<br>(.11)  | 15.07<br>(.13)                        |
| ANP Camps             | 62.64<br>(.39)                          | 20.36<br>(.17)  | 36.22<br>(.27)  | 79.64<br>(.44)                            | 15.55<br>(.13)  | 54.74<br>(.35)                        |
| Mahilasamajams        | 27.39<br>(.21)                          | 55.66<br>(.35)  | 60.77<br>(.38)  | 12.83<br>(.11)                            | 18.55<br>(.16)  | 37.33<br>(.27)                        |
| Radio                 | 4.75                                    | 3.69  | 56.84<br>(.36)  | 29.44<br>(.23)                            | 6.72  | <b>41.79</b><br>(.29)                 |
| News Papers           | 36.00<br>(.26)                          | 133.22<br>(.57)   | 46.08<br>(.32)  | 8.19                                      | 48.71<br>(.33)  | 35.99<br>(.26)                        |
| Teaching Institutions | 52.42<br>(.34)                          | 62.23<br>(.38)  | 29.88<br>(.22)  | 8.00                                      | 17.86<br>(.15)  | 9.34                                  |
| Films                 | 2.51                                    | 2.90  | 28.19<br>(.22)  | 14.47<br>(.13)                            | 12.91<br>(.11)  | 1.09                                  |
| Magazines             | 39.01<br>(.28)                          | 29.16<br>(.23)  | 23.75<br>(.19)  | 14.35<br>(.13)                            | 10.24   | 8.01                                  |
| Neighbours            | 15.40<br>(.13)                          | 17.36<br>(.15)  | 31.27<br>(.24)  | 13.48<br>(.12)                            | 5.40  | 11.16                                 |
| Friends               | 21.68<br>(.18)                          | 47.18<br>(.32)  | 42.32<br>(.30)  | 27.09<br>(.21)                            | 9.42  | 2.94                                  |
| Relatives             | 10.13                                   | 14.61<br>(.13)  | 48.27<br>(.33)  | 14.06<br>(.12)                            | 10.89   | 10.22                                 |

magazines and other publications and relatives. Economic status is an important factor which affects the use of modern means of communication. Highly credible sources in this case are news papers, magazines and other publications and mahilasarajams. Least credible ones are neighbours, and Block personnel. Education is also an important factor which influences the credibility of various information sources. Radio is the most credible source while relatives, neighbours and films are the least credible sources. Occupation exercises significant influence in the credibility of only five sources studied, namely Block personnel, ANP camps, mahilasarajams, news papers and relatives. Other sources do not enjoy significant credibility.

The major social characteristics studied are participation in the activities of Block, educational institutions, voluntary organisations and ANP camps, membership in cosmopolite organisations, residence in ANP or non ANP blocks, etc. The influence of these variables on the credibility perception of respondents was studied and the results are presented in Table 4. There is significant relationship between the participation in the activities of voluntary organisations and credibility of all sources. It is significant to note that participants in local voluntary organisations give maximum credibility to mahilasarajams, while participants in cosmopolite organisations give maximum credibility to newspapers. Understandably participants in Block activities assign maximum credibility to block personnel. In the case of participants in ANP camps there is significant relationship only with Block personnel, ANP camps, mahilasarajams, radio, and "news papers. Teaching institutions as a source of information is given very high credibility by those village women who visit educational institutions though their first preference is news papers.

### Summary

The present study was conducted in the NES Blocks in Trivandrum District, Kerala to determine the communication source utilisation, source credibility and the effect of socio-economic and personal characteristics on the source credibility perception of village women in respect of information on food and nutrition. Data were collected by personal interview from a sample of 100 village women randomly selected. The study revealed that the sources most often utilised by village women are radio, mahilasarajams, block personnel, ANP camp, magazines, news papers, friends, neighbours, relatives, teaching institutions and films with their ranking in that order. Block personnel, ANP training camps, mahilasarajams and radio are perceived as the most credible sources. In general the socio-economic and personal characteristics have significant relationship with all the sources, except in very few cases. It is also indicated that even though some of the common sources like relatives, friends, etc., are credible sources, their utilisation is very poor.

സംഗ്രഹം

പോഷകാഹാര വിജ്ഞാന സ്രോതസ്സുകളുടെ വിശ്വാസതയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഈ പഠനം തിരുവനന്തപുരം ജില്ലയിലെ ബ്ലോക്കുകളിലാണ് നടത്തിയത്. ഏകദേശം 100 ഗ്രാമീണ സ്ത്രീകളിൽ നിന്നുമാണ് ഈ പഠനത്തിനുള്ള വിവരങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിച്ചത്. പോഷകാഹാര വിജ്ഞാന സ്രോതസ്സായ അവയുടെ ഉപയോഗ പ്രാധാന്യത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ രേഡിയോ, മഹിളാസമാജങ്ങൾ, ബ്ലോക്ക് ജീവനക്കാർ, ക്യാമ്പുകൾ, വാരപ്പതിപ്പുകൾ, പത്രങ്ങൾ, സൂ ഹൃത്തുകൾ, അയൽ വാസികൾ, ബന്ധുക്കൾ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ, സിനിമ എന്നിവയാണെന്നാണ് ഈ പഠനം തെളിയിച്ചത്. ഇവയിൽ രേഡിയോ, ബ്ലോക്ക് ജീവനക്കാർ ക്യാമ്പുകൾ, മഹിളാ സമാജങ്ങൾ എന്നീ സ്രോതസ്സുകളിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിക്കുന്ന വിജ്ഞാനത്തിനാണ് പഠന വിധേയരായ സ്ത്രീകൾ കൂടുതൽ വിശ്വാസത പ്രകടിപ്പിച്ചത്. പൊതുവേ ഇവ രാജ്യ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം, പ്രായം, വരുമാനം, ഉദ്യോഗം എന്നീ വസ്തുതകൾ മേല്ലാഞ്ഞ സ്രോതസ്സുകളുടെ ഉപയോഗത്തെയും, വിശ്വാസത്തെയും സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്ന ഘടകങ്ങളാണെന്ന് ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ **rolonrao** മനസ്സിലാക്കി

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