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## Role Of Newspaper And Television In Gratifying Information Needs And Empowerment Of Rural Women In Karnataka

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### Abstract

Women's empowerment is essential for the development of the country. However, the role of media in bringing the information that women need most to excel in their life is equally important. Among them newspaper and television play a major role. In this context, a study is undertaken to know the media utilization levels by rural women, and to find out the reasons for using media. The study also sought to understand their information needs, and to know to what level adequate information is given by the media for empowering the rural women's lives. A survey research was conducted among 200 women in Tumkur, Shimoga, Hasan, Beluru, Chikkamagalore, Raichur, Koppal, Gadag and Haveri districts of Karnataka State through questionnaire. The information needs for their empowerment was mostly related to social and political rights, government schemes, Panchayath schemes and bank loan facilities. The study showed that majority respondents were dependent on television for their information needs, while only one-third relied on newspaper. Though the utilisation of television was majorly about gratifying entertainment needs, information was stated to be the second. All the respondents were happy with the coverage of necessary information that they were getting from the both media that resulted in well-being in life.

**Key words:** Information needs, Media utilization, Women empowerment, Newspaper, Television, Rural journalism.

### Introduction

Uses and gratification studies of media have often theorised that people differ by their information needs and accordingly depend on various media. Women comprising half of the world population differ from men in their wants and needs. Further, the needs of rural women are different in comparison to those of urban women. This dimension needs an in-depth analysis.

The Beijing Declaration at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) point 13 says, 'Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace'.

Considering women as abala (weak) and weaker sex, one of the law makers in ancient India stated, 'had to be under the control of father in childhood, the husband in woman hoods and the son in old age'. They are discriminated socially, politically, and culturally. They get lower pay than men for the same work, their economic contribution as housekeeper is not considered a work. Rural development plans have failed to take cognizance of the contribution women make to national development (Subramanya, 2009).

As mass media is made vibrant with new communication technologies, the portrayal of women in the media has a significant impact on women's rights, as information is communicated faster and easier. Print and audio visual media can be used to create public awareness on women's rights and break patriarchal stereotypes. However, any portrayal that is derogatory to women may have the opposite effects of perpetuating stereotypes. Hence there is a need to promote positive images of women in the media while, at the same time, respecting a citizen's right to freedom of expression and right to information (Nagar, 2008).

In Indian media, rural journalism mainly focuses on the lives, issues, and development of people living in rural area. Since more than half of India's population lives in rural areas, it is important that their stories and problems are highlighted in the media (Census of India, 2011). Rural journalism helps to bring attention of local issues like socio-culture activities, farming, health, education, women's rights, and rural development, which are often ignored by mainstream media (Panda, 2018).

In the past, rural journalism was mainly supported by government programs and print media. Today, digital platforms like community radio, online rural news portals, and mobile journalism are making rural voices stronger and more reachable (Roy, 2022). Despite this, rural journalists still face challenges like lack of funds, resources, and training (Rana, 2021).

## Literature Review

Media bring in various images of women to society. The media should highlight the significant role women play in national development, recognizing their potential for responsibility beyond the domestic sphere, which is often overlooked or marginalized, as stated by Vaishali (2014).

Research finds that women's supplements in newspapers and magazines are not development-oriented, with respondents agreeing that magazines have potential for women's growth, but unfortunately women tend to focus on stereotypical interests like cooking, interior decoration, and family care (Joshi and Prahad, 2006).

Mass media, particularly television, significantly improves women's household decision-making capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is particularly important for women with less exposure, early reproductive age, the poor, unemployed, and rural residents, and may be applied globally (Abdul et. al, 2020).

Singh (2011) in his study on television serials found women completely objectified and often displaying their body and the fabrics. They give five basic characteristic of electronic media—1. Women are underrepresented in general and occupy less central roles than men in television. 2. Marriage and parenthood are considered more important to women often limited to domestic roles. 3. Employed women are shown in subordinate to men with little status or power. 4. Women are more passive than men. 5. Television ignores or distorts the women's movements.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to know the role of newspaper and television in gratifying information needs and empowerment of rural women in Karnataka. Specifically,

1. To know the levels of media utilization by rural women,
2. To study their reasons for using print and television,
3. To find out their information needs, and
4. To find out how media respond to rural women's needs and empower them.

### **Methodology**

The present study was conducted in Karnataka in two districts each from the four administrative divisions—Mysore, Bangalore, Belagavi and Kalaburagi. Sampling selection was under the multistage sampling.

The 200 rural women, representing the eight districts in random selection sample, were the respondents of this study. Out of these 200 rural women, 59 belonged to age group 20-30 (29.5%), 72 belonged to age group 31-40 (36%), and 69 belonged to age group 41-50 (31.5%). By educational background; 55 were illiterates, 76 had finished schooling, 55 had finished PUC or graduation and 14 had post- graduation degree or above.

Data was collected in 2023 through survey, using pretested questionnaire. Questions were mainly based on Likert scale. Interviews were also conducted with select respondents.

## Results and Discussion

### Levels of media utilization by rural women

Table 1. Levels of media utilization by rural women (N=200)

Medium	Using		Never		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
Radio	8	4	192	96	200	100
Internet with computer	2	1	198	99		
Mobile	197	98.5	3	1.5		
- Key Pad	27	13.7	00	00		
- Smart	170	86.3	00	00		
Television	183	91.5	17	8.5		
Newspaper	67	33.5	133	66.5		

As Table 1 shows, majority of the rural women respondents (98.5%) used mobile phone. The second highest utilized medium was television (91.5%). Though only 55 respondents were illiterate, newspaper reading was very poor as only 33.5 percent had the habit of it. Radio and internet were very rarely accessed.

### Reasons for Using Newspaper and Television

Table 2. Reasons for using newspaper and television

Reason	Newspaper		Television	
	Nos	%	Nos	%
For information	50	74.6	9	4.9
Entertainment	12	17.9	152	83.1
Sharing with friends and others	5	7.5	22	12
<b>Total</b>	67	100	183	100

All the respondents accessed newspaper and television which was in Kannada language. Data presented in Table 2 clearly shows that maximum number of newspaper readers (74.6%) read newspapers for information while those watched television for information was only 4.9 percent. However television as an entertainment medium was appreciated by 83.1 percent while entertainment value of the newspaper was acknowledge by only 17.9 percent. Both the media were accessed also by women to share the information with others to engage in conversation and discussion. It was necessary to become something important too before others. Television content was more preferred in this activity.

## Information needs of Rural Women

Table 3. Rural women and their information needs

Needs of information	Absolutely necessary		Sometime Necessary		Not necessary		Total	
	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%	Nos	%
To become aware of social rights	145	72.5	44	22	11	5.5	200	100
To become aware of political rights	162	81	30	15	8	4		
To become aware of cultural rights	144	72	44	22	12	6		
To know Schemes / empowerment programs of Government	196	98	4	2	00	00		
To know Schemes / empowerment programs by Self Help Groups	196	98	4	2	00	00		
To know role and functions of Panchayath raj	183	91.5	15	7.5	2	1		
To know role and functions of Anganawadi worker	185	92.5	13	6.5	2	1		
To know role and functions of Asha workers	189	94.5	9	4.5	2	1		
To know loan and other financial facilities at banks	187	93.5	12	6	1	0.5		

Table 4 shows respondents' information needs. All the information needs listed and added to by the respondents at the pre-testing of the questionnaire stage are listed in the Table. All the needs were considered vital by the respondents. There were a few who did not consider social, political and cultural rights as important. These were more or less found necessary sometimes. But there were respondents who found that absolutely necessary.

Majority respondents (98%) considered it was absolutely necessary to know the schemes and opportunities by the government / SHGs. Information related to Panchayath raj, opportunities available with Anganawadi and Asha workers and programs, financial opportunities with bank were considered important.

## Perception of media response to information needs

Table 4. Media and empowering rural women with information

Frequency	Print		Television	
	Nos	%	Nos	%
Always	56	83.6	25	13.7
Sometimes	11	16.4	40	21.9
Never	00	0.0	118	64.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondents' perspectives on how media respond to their information needs were divided by type of medium. While out of 67 respondents who read newspaper majority (56) stated newspaper always met their expectations of being an information provider, television viewers (183) were not that happy as television provided them more entertainment than information. Majority of them (64.5%) stated that television never gave them any information. One reason for this image of television's failure to provide information could be that the audience always watched television for entertainment.

## Conclusion

The objectives of media are providing information, education and entertainment to the public. Empowerment of women happens with the right knowledge and attitude provided by media. Rural women depend on newspaper for information and television for entertainment. The study found that rural women were more worried about financial and economic gains emanating from information provided by media than knowing about their social, political and cultural rights. Rural women considered newspaper as having more power of empowerment than television. If television includes development messages in its entertainment programmes it will lead to empowerment of rural women.

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