

Role of Mobile Phone Usages in Rural Women's Empowerment: A Study in Varanasi District of Uttar Pradesh



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Supervisor

Prof. A.K. Singh

Submitted by

Swati Pahuja

**DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY
VARANASI - 221005
INDIA**

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Women are considered to be the most potential human infrastructure in the countryside. The participation and involvement of women is quite essential for the effective implementation of any countryside rural and social developmental programs. In Indian culture and civilization the girl child represents beauty, auspiciousness and prosperity. In fact women represent half the resources and half the potential in all the societies. Though our constitution and many other acts have promoted gender equality but their status continue to be low. It's a well known and proven fact now that women and in particular rural women are highly disadvantaged and discriminated section of Indian society, as a result of which their decision making ability and influence in the society are limited. For these women, the opportunity to make use of mobile phones or other ICTs could reduce the existing information barriers and help them to better support their families by developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge.

India has witnessed unprecedented growth in mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions and has emerged as second-largest mobile phone user-base in the world, with over 1178.20 million users as of Oct, 2017.(TRAI, 2017)

The tele-density (number of phones per hundred people) has grown over seven-fold in past ten years, that is, from about 13 per cent in Mar, 2006 to over 91.11 per cent till Oct, 2017. Rural tele-density has also shown remarkable progress, rising from 1.9 per cent in 2005 to over 56.54 per cent by Oct, 2017. (TRAI, 2017)

According to Indian Census, 2011, out of 1210.2 million population of India, size of rural population is 833.1 million (68.84 per cent of total population) and 48.6 per cent of this 833.1 million rural population are women, who are still disadvantaged because they tend to have fewer opportunities than men to access information and

new technologies, thus limiting their decision-making ability and influence within the community. (Frid, 2012)

For these women, the opportunity to make use of mobile phones or other ICTs could reduce the existing information barriers and help them to better support their families by developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge. So, in this context, the present study will help in understanding mobile phone usages pattern and its role in empowerment of rural women.

The study was conducted based on following research questions:

- * To what extent ICTs (mobile phones) are used by rural women?
- * How can mobile phone help in empowering rural women?

The present study entitled “**Role of mobile phone usages in rural women’s empowerment: A study in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh**” was undertaken with the following objectives:

- * The first objective was to study the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
- * Second objective of the study was to identify the extent of use of ICTs (mobile phones etc).
- * Third objective of the study was to assess the level of empowerment (personal, psychological, social, economic, financial, legal and political) of the respondents by the use of mobile phones.
- * Fourth objective of the study was to study the relationship between empowerment (personal, psychological, social, economic, financial, legal and political) and independent variables of the respondents.
- * Fifth objective of the study was to identify the barriers in usage of mobile phones by the respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ex-post facto research design was used for conducting the study. Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh was selected purposively. Two Blocks, namely, Araziline and Pindara were selected randomly for this study. Five villages from each block were selected randomly. From Araziline block the selected villages were: Bairwan, Bhadarasi, Gora, Payagpur and Sarauni. From Pindara block, the selected villages were: Charo, Ganzari, Karemua, Mulka and Sahapur. From the selected 10 villages, a list of mobile phone users and non-users was prepared. Through proportionate random sampling method, 150 mobile phone users (Group A) and 150 non-users (Group B) were selected from the list. Thus, a total of 300 respondents were selected for the present study.

Keeping in view the specific objectives of study, respondents were asked to access their all means of empowerment. Apart from these, variables like age, caste, education, marital status, land holding, family type, family size, material possession, social participation, position in the family, annual family income, source of information utilized, achievement motivation, value orientation, and decision making pattern were also studied. Data collected during the course of the study was compiled and tabulated.

The interview schedule was used for data collection, which was pre-tested and modified to reduce ambiguity in the questions. Data was collected personally by administering the standardized schedule and analyzed by using statistical tools *viz.*, mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, correlation and Z-test.

6.1 Profile characteristics

1. Majority of the mobile phone users (58.67 percent) were young in age. Among non users, majority of them were old in age (65.33 percent).
2. Majority of the mobile phone users (73.33 percent) and non users (68.67 percent) were of General Caste category, respectively.

3. Majority of the mobile phone users had education up to Primary level (35.33 percent) and among non users maximum percentage (84.00 percent) of respondents were illiterate
4. Majority of the mobile phone users (58.00 percent) and non users (70.00 percent) was of married category, respectively.
5. Majority of mobile phone users (68.67 percent) were under the category of medium sized land holding. Among non users, majority (43.33 percent) of them were under the category of marginal sized land holding.
6. Majority of mobile phone users (64.67 percent) and non users (54.00 percent) belonged to nuclear family.
7. Majority of mobile phone users (48.67 percent) and non users (54.00 percent) had medium family size.
8. Majority of mobile phone users (64.67 percent) and non users (76.00 percent) were of medium category of overall material possessions.
9. Majority of mobile phone users (84.67 percent) and non users (96.67 percent) did not have membership of any organization.
10. Majority of mobile phone users (58.00 percent) and non users (90.00 percent) were dependent on their husbands.
11. Majority of mobile phone users (92.00 percent) and non users (86.00 percent) had Medium annual family income.
12. Majority of mobile phone users (44.67 percent) had mobile phone as the frequently used source of information and among non users frequently used source of information for the majority of them (40.67 percent) was Neighbor/relative.
13. Majority of mobile phone users (72.67 percent) and non users (58.00 percent) had medium level of achievement motivation.
14. Majority of mobile phone users (74.00 percent) had medium level of value orientation while among non users; majority of them (66.00 percent) had low level of value orientation.

15. Majority of mobile phone users (67.33 percent) and non users (72.00 percent) had medium level of overall decision making pattern.

6.2 Extent of use of mobile phones

1. Majority of Mobile phone users (46.00 percent) had Button phone.
2. Majority of Mobile phone users (95.33 percent) had one handset.
3. Majority of Mobile phone users (62.00 percent) had One SIM card.
4. Majority of Mobile phone users (64.67 percent) had learnt to operate mobile with the help of Family member.
5. Majority of Mobile phone users (100.00 percent) could operate Making Calls and Receiving calls
6. Making Calls and Receiving calls was among daily used features of mobile phone for the majority of respondents (100.00 percent).
7. Majority of Mobile phone users (58.67 percent) spent One-Two hours on mobile phone.
8. Majority of Mobile phone users (64.67 percent) preferred afternoon time for using mobile phone.
9. Majority of Mobile phone users (68.67 percent) did not use internet on their mobile phones while the remaining respondents (31.33 percent) did use internet on their mobile phones.
10. For majority of Mobile phone users (100.00 percent) the primary purpose for using internet on their mobile phones was browsing and social networking.
11. Majority of Mobile phone users (100.00 percent) the social networking sites/apps which they accessed on their mobile phones were Facebook, Youtube and Whatsapp.

12. Majority of Mobile phone users (55.33 percent) opined that mobile technology services are available at affordable prices.
13. Majority of Mobile phone users (100.00 percent) perceived that most important purpose of mobile phone was communication.
14. Majority of Mobile phone users (100.00 percent) opined positively that mobile phone played a very important role in their lives as it makes their lives easy going.

6.3 Extent of Empowerment

1. Majority of mobile phone users (69.33 percent) and non users (58.00 percent) had medium level of personal empowerment.
2. Majority of mobile phone users had medium and high level of psychological empowerment while majority of non users had medium and low level of psychological empowerment.
3. Majority of mobile phone users (70.67 percent) and non users (58.00 percent) had medium level of social empowerment.
4. Majority of mobile phone users had medium and high level of economic empowerment while majority of non users had medium and low level of economic empowerment.
5. Majority of mobile phone users and non users had medium and low level of financial empowerment.
6. Majority of mobile phone users had medium and high level of Legal empowerment while majority of non users had medium and low level of Legal empowerment.
7. Majority of mobile phone users had medium and high level of Political empowerment while majority of non users had medium and low level of Political empowerment.

8. Majority of mobile phone users had medium and high level of overall empowerment while majority of non users had medium and low level of overall empowerment.

6.4 Relationship of socio-personal and personal characteristics of respondents with empowerment

Education, social participation, position in the family, annual family income, source of information utilized, achievement motivation, value orientation and decision making pattern were significantly related with empowerment of rural women who were using mobile phones. Age, caste, family type, marital status, land holding, materials possession and family size was not found to be significantly related with empowerment of rural women who were using mobile phones.

Education, social participation, position in the family, annual family income, source of information utilized, achievement motivation, value orientation and decision making pattern were significantly related with empowerment of rural women who were not using mobile phones. Age, caste, land holding, marital status, family size, materials possession and family type was not found to be significantly related with empowerment of rural women who were not using mobile phones.

6.5 The barriers in usage of mobile phones as perceived by the respondents

Extremely perceived barrier in usage of mobile phones for the majority of Mobile phone users and for non users was Poor financial conditions.

6.5 Conclusion

This study helped the researcher to gain insights about how the mobile phone becomes the driving force in empowering rural women. It was found during formulating the whole study and especially during data collection that rural women who were using mobile phones were having better orientation towards life than those who were not using it. The usage pattern of mobile phones of the users revealed the fact that there was a lot of craze for social networking among young rural girls. And most importantly mobile phone users believed that this small technology has big

significance in their lives. So these were the positive outcomes of the study. Among negative outcomes, what transpired was that the existence of gender stereotyping in rural society prevented the rural women from using mobile phones. Thus, it can be concluded that there should be more and more penetration of mobile phones among women so that each and every women becomes empowered.

6.6 Implication of the study

The findings of the study can help the policy makers to make policies which can make the rural women empowered. Given below are the implications that can be taken into account:

1. Education of the rural women is needed to be improved as it plays an important role in empowering women. The national literacy mission, RTE of government of India is a significant step in this direction.
2. Social participation of both, mobile phone users and non users was low so the developmental agencies should motivate the rural people for using different media like TV, radio, newspaper and also create awareness about merits of participation in social institutions.
3. Annual family income was found to be one of the important factors contributing to the empowerment of rural women. Hence, Government should pay attention towards creation of income generating activities for rural women.
4. Source of information utilized was also a factor in empowerment. Legislators and policy makers should devote themselves in taking adequate measures needed to be taken for making rural women empowered in real sense. NGOs which are working at grass root level should also be strengthened so that they can work more effectively for attaining the desired objective, that is, to make the rural women empowered.
5. Decision making pattern was yet another significant factor in women empowerment. Hence, necessary actions should be taken by government as well as other stakeholders to spread awareness among rural women about their

latent ability which they possess to take prompt and rational decisions for themselves and their families.

6.7 Suggestion for future research

Present study suggests the following areas for further research for overall improvement of socio- economic and personal status and empowerment of the rural women as well as their personality development.

1. Finding out the role of ICTs other than mobile phones in empowerment of rural women.
2. Finding out the role and perception of rural women towards empowerment and development.
3. A comparative analysis of the empowerment of rural and urban women can be done.
4. A comparative analysis of the rural and urban women with respect to their usage pattern of mobile phones can be done.
5. The study was conducted in only one district of Uttar Pradesh with reference to empowerment, it is necessary to have studies in other areas also in order to generalize the findings.

