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Full Length Article

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Usage in Changing Lives of Rural Women of Chirang District in the state of Assam

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ABSTRACT

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The study attempts to highlight the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Usage in Changing Lives of Rural Women of Chirang District in the state of Assam. Usages of ICT for women have been limited to TV programs, mobile, video camera and some networking activities. Relatively few women have used it for business, agriculture, educational information, bill payments or for purposes of livelihood and wellbeing for themselves and their families. The usages of ICT by rural women need to be studied as it is an indicator of empowerment of women in Indian context. Keeping in view objectives of the study descriptive survey method is adopted for the present study. The population for the study constitutes the rural women in Chirang District. For the study data collected from the primary sources. Primary data collected for the respondents were randomly selected. A questionnaire was also developed and it was used as a tool for collecting data regarding the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Usage in Changing Lives of Rural Women. The results of the study revealed that economic condition of rural women is below the satisfactory level in the studied area. The rural women access to ICTs and their usage in the study area was observed to be less in ATM, internet, and computer. Majority of the women in rural areas reported that the lack of awareness of benefits of ICTs restricted the rural women in using ICTs.

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INTRODUCTION

Technology plays a crucial role in all walks of human lives in modern times. ICT has become an indispensable part of the human life relating to various activities and have a positive impact among the general public. The improvements in ICT in the present scenario is having a great impact in the human daily activities that sometimes we barely notice its effect, and has had a major impact on the way we live, work and play. Information and Communication Technology is the new tool for rural development. ICT are presently used in sectors such as banking, education, management, health, commerce, agriculture, transport, communication. The present day has witnessed an increasing rate of people who are engaged in the usage of ICT in various fields. ICT has become the essential source of information where people can connect, discover and deliberate the world around. Various forms of ICTs like radio, television, computer, mobile phone, and camera which help strengthen the existing knowledge to achieve a goal. ICT has brought an enormous change in almost all aspects of social and economic development of human lives. Information and Communication Technologies, and advances in technological innovations have improved the socio-economic and culture all the people across the globe. Women had a major role to play in the world of ICT. It is women participation in economic development is increasing at a very high rate, though women participation in economic efficiency is not fully recognized but women are using ICT to widen their business and moderate initiatives all over the world. Yet in many places especially in the rural areas women face a lot of challenges comparing to men with respect to access to ICT.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rathi, S. and Niyogi, S. (2015) conducted study on role of ICT in women empowerment. This study has found that through ICT women are getting security, awareness, knowledge, employments, confidence, popularity etc. Through Internet, television, radio and mobile phones women are

MAJOR FINDINGS:

1. Majority of the rural women are poor and average monthly income of these women varies between Rs. 2000 – Rs. 6000. Many of the women are agriculture laborers' and domestic workers and they are exclusively dependent upon agriculture and domestic work for their livelihood. Many of the rural women even have not passed class X.
2. The women access to ICTs and their usage in the study area was observed to be less in computer, ATM, internet, CD/VC player, radio and camera. However, mobile phones, TV

and has helped to increase their knowledge in development related to different aspects of their life.

3. It was found that majority of the rural women use ICT for agriculture and entertainment. It was also found that more than 26 percent rural use ICT for getting information related to business, market, weather and online shopping. Some of the women have used ICT services for fund transfer, bill payments, online banking, loan service, job opportunity and educational information.
4. The study also revealed that there is lack of confidence in operating ICTs, lack of awareness of benefits of ICTs, and high cost of ICTs, non availability of time, low network connectivity, language problem, contents are difficult to understand were the major difficulties faced by the rural women in the effective use of ICTs.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Many women do not know how to get ICT services due to a lack of awareness. The government should introduce necessary program to help the women to get business information, market information, agriculture, weather information and educational information through ICT.
2. More awareness-cum-training programs on ICTs should be encouraged among rural women in order to increase the confidence, and skill in using ICTs for development for these women.
3. It is suggested that the banks have to make an effort to create awareness on use of e-banking services among the rural women by conducting seminar.
4. Women of the rural areas are usually familiar with the local language. All the application software, the agriculture, market, weather, educational, e-banking, job opportunity related information should be made available in local language as far as practicable.

CONCLUSION

ICT plays very important role in the social, political, economical and cultural development. Most of the women do not know about using the new technologies. From the study, we can say that mobile phone and television were the most utilized ICTs among the rural women. There was a positive effect of ICT on their day to day life but the use of these ICT devices is limited by some factors. Therefore, there is need to encourage ICT user in the area, by making available all that are necessary for effective ICT usage, including awareness programs, training for knowing about the facilities, technological knowledge and information which will lead to improved standard of living of the rural women living in Chirang District of Assam State. Majority of the women felt for lack

of confidence in handling ICT, and complex internet contents, low network connectivity. These women also reported that they had difficulty in using computer, A.T.M, mobile and internet due to the lack of skill in using it. This indicates that there is need for awareness and education need to be educated so that they are in a position to understand the latest concepts and developments related to ICTs. Society must be concerned about the attitudes of rural women with regard to acceptance of ICT. The use of Internet had the lowest participants which indicate that Internet is not common among the rural women. This could be due to insufficient internet skills and knowledge. The study shows that lack of knowledge of ICT develops inferiority complex among women.

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