

Women Empowerment and Media literacy: A Study in Kancheepuram District

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Abstract: *In India, women play an important role in our society and technology has become a tool to empower women in innumerable ways. While new forms of literacy emerge as part of the new media landscape, they are not necessarily recognized and promoted as essential to thrive in a knowledge-based society. Yet because of the growing media convergence, women need to be empowered to promote this and be involved in active participation more effectively. The present study which is descriptive and analytical in design has been conducted on random samples of rural women from four villages in the Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu. Survey methodology was used where in interview schedules were used to gain insight into women's accessibility to media and usage as well as their need for information regarding various issues such as health care, in expensive educational facilities, legal provisions in various areas, etc. The study also focuses on the role of Self Help Groups, Micro financing and Employment prospects.*

Keywords: *Media literacy, Women Empowerment, Media usage patterns.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Media is ubiquitous and there is hardly anybody who is unaware of media or who does not use it as part of their daily routine. Newspapers, magazines, radio and television have been part of the regular media diet of most people over the years. With computers and digitization in the 1970s, the establishment of the World Wide Web in the 1990s and then the mobile revolution in the early 21st century, communication has received a boost with the media scenario being totally revolutionized. Today content generation and content dissemination is that much easier and quicker.

However, in this highly technology driven world, ironically, there exists the great divide between the haves and have not's, the literates and illiterates, where there is information overload on one hand and a total disconnect on the other. It is essential that women be harnessed to use technology and thereby included in the big picture of media literacy. Poverty, gender discrepancies, illiteracy and disconnectivity have left women all over the world helpless when it comes to getting information. Sadly, historically across the globe such discrepancies are not confined to a specific culture, region, country or status.

In India, women play an important role in our society and technology has become a tool to empower women in innumerable ways. Mass media and other digital technologies are used to promote media literacy in this process of empowerment, and there is a massive increase of media usage in rural India. Traditional, electronic and new media play a vital role in promoting awareness and disseminating information in shaping women's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. The influence of mass media has resulted in enormous changes in the areas of decision making, economic independence and awareness of women's rights and responsibilities.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the rural women's ownership and accessibility to media.
- To study media viewing patterns and time spent on media.
- To analyse the types of information that is accessed through each medium (including SHGs and Panchayat local bodies).
- To find out how empowered women in rural areas are in terms of (owning property, choosing own friends & freedom to live the way they want, decision making in financial, family and personal matters)

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

This study provides certain pertinent answers to fundamental questions such as the rural women's literacy rates, ownership and access to media, time spent with media and the popularity of any individual medium and why, as well as what sort of information was the most sought after in media. In a study with concerns of media literacy and empowerment, it was also imperative to address issues regarding women's freedom. Therefore, questions on basic matters such as decision making, for example, have been addressed.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The well known adage which states that “If a woman is educated, the whole family gets educated”, is very appropriate for Media Literacy. Poverty, gender discrepancies, illiteracy and disconnectivity have left women all over the world helpless when it comes to getting information. Sadly, historically across the globe such discrepancies are not confined to a specific culture, region, country or status. But one thing that has been observed is that this is more obvious in the rural and backward areas (*Johnson. N,2013*). It is essential that women be harnessed to use technology and thereby included in the big picture of media literacy. Having technology and not being able to use it, is as good as not having it. Developing media skills is equally essential. When women citizens become critical consumers of information, then they would most definitely contribute to public discourse effectively. Another reason is that in developing media skills, women citizens can protect themselves and others from harmful content pushed mainly by new information and communication technologies.

4.1 Portrayal of Women in Media

How women are portrayed or represented in media is also important. Media can play a significant role in sensitizing the society about gender issues. But, before that, the media itself needs to be sensitized in covering women issues. The distribution of power between the two sexes both physical and economic is unequal, leading to discrimination against women. Media exerts immense influential power on the masses; this cannot be undermined.

According to *Adhikari Sharda* in her article “*Media and Gender Stereotyping: The Need for Media Literacy*”, the portrayal of women as an equal has not been given the priority it deserves by the media. Women’s issues should be dealt with in a sensitive, responsible way. There is foeticide and the declining sex ratio, rape and workplace harassment, dowry-related crimes and domestic violence, eve teasing and molestation-all these and more are issues that the media needs to sensitize the society about (*Adhikari, 2014*).

Total women empowerment can come about only if it includes political, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life. This happens only if development includes women participation and control over resources of power. The electronic media and particularly TV has become the most influential medium of mass communication. It is a disturbing trend when a lot of films and serials represent women as “the weaker sex” who should remain subservient (*Kushwah & Garg, 2014*)

4.2 Indian Scenario

In spite of the developments, India still lags far behind in the sphere of human development. The 2015 Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) places India 130th among the 188 nations, with a 0.609 HDI and falls under the medium development category. On India's GDI, the report said the 2014 female HDI value for India is 0.525 in contrast to 0.660 for males, resulting in a Gender Inequality Index (GDI) value of 0.795 in the year 2014. India has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.563 (*HDP report, 2015*). It is clear that the physical and social infrastructure required for enabling a higher quality of living and development has not kept pace with the country's economic growth.

While cities and urban areas have benefited from the economic growth, vast tracts of rural India are still largely underdeveloped and untouched by technology developments in urban areas. More than 700 million Indians live in rural areas and far-flung villages that do not yet have basic services such as electricity, sanitation and water, much less knowledge-enhancing technologies such as telecommunication services.

India is predominantly an agricultural country and the same applies to Tamil Nadu as well. Agriculture is the primary occupation of about seventy percent of the rural population of Tamil Nadu. Around 34% of the state's population resides in urban areas while the remaining population resides in the rural areas.

4.3 Empowerment as a Process

The term empowerment covers a vast landscape of meanings, interpretations, definitions & disciplines ranging from psychology & philosophy to the highly commercialized self help industry & motivational sciences. Sociological empowerment often addresses members of groups that social discrimination processes have excluded from decision making processes. Discriminations could be based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion or gender. Empowerment is not essentially political alone; it is a process having personal, economic, social and political dimensions with personal empowerment being the core of the process. As a methodology it is often associated with feminism.

In rural areas, for example, women’s economic opportunities remain restricted by social, cultural and religious barriers to a great extent. Tribal women are exploited even more by their employer because of their lack of awareness regarding pay structures and other working contracts. The main obstacles behind this ignorance are lack of knowledge, education and blind faith upon the employer. Thus, they are living with the false belief that nobody listens to them because they are women. They do not know that they are equally important and their contributions are actually countable in national development. For this reason ‘education for all’ has been strongly

recommended and focused on by our Indian government. India has made a considerable progress in this sector and with all the efforts the literacy rate grew to 74.04% in 2011 (*Glenwright, 2011*)

4.4 Media Usage Patterns

Qualitative and Quantitative approaches were employed for picking up the empirical data from the field and the total sample size was 115. This study found out that media has reached the houses of marginalised sections and other disadvantaged sections of the society but it did not play a very important role in their day to day lives. Mobile was used the most with TV coming in second and radio and newspapers a distant third. Most of the media were used by the women for entertainment purposes alone and it hardly played a role in creating awareness about women empowerment. It has also been found that 13.55% villagers did not use any sort of media.

The main reason behind this situation is unawareness about their rights and freedom given by the constitution of India. Though they are economically independent, they do not make any major decisions related to family matters. The Government already has various schemes for women like 'Widow pension, 'Kanyashri', '33% reservation' & also various other projects for tribal women but unlike the literate women who are aware of every scheme, the tribal women remain unaware. They are accustomed to their traditional media but in case of other media like print or audio they remain totally detached from them. They are in a world of their own. They are illiterate so newspapers or educational programmes do not really benefit them. The audio-visual and mobile media are used mainly for entertainment purposes.

4.5 Social Media and Empowerment

Citizens who have access to the Internet and social media platforms are more aware of their social, political and economic environment than those citizens who lack access. It is perhaps then not surprising that studies done in the US, Argentina and Kenya have repeatedly shown that citizens' awareness of inequalities in their communities prompts attention to and ultimately support for equal rights, including women's rights (*Salzburg study*). It has been emphasized that providing the right infrastructure and the education to use technology is essential. The disparities of access that currently exist between countries in various regions of the world affect how groups can organize and use social media as a platform for promoting human rights causes, including women's rights.

According to a case study from South Africa (*Miroux, 2011*), social media is being used by an NGO called Gender Links to empower women and other disadvantaged groups in southern Africa, especially campaigns around HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence and other human rights messages. With the rapid dissemination of information today, enabled by the proliferation of social media, as well as the significant steps being taken to provide infrastructural growth to rural areas in most developing nations, one can only hope that women will gradually be empowered through media literacy and realize that their voice counts and that they will truly be empowered.

5. METHOD:

Methodology is the backbone for any successful research. The items discussed in this chapter include the study area and sample selected for the research, design and research procedure, pretesting of data and tools for analysis.

5.1 Study Area and Selected Population

Kanchipuram district of Tamilnadu has been selected for the purpose of this study. Located on the picturesque Palar River on the northern east coast of Tamil Nadu, Kanchipuram is surrounded in the west by Vellore and Thiruvannamalai districts, in the north by Thiruvallur and Chennai districts, in the south by Villuppuram district and in the east by the Bay of Bengal. It has a total geographical area of 4393.37 sq kms and a coastline of 57 kms. Though known as the temple city, it is more than a pilgrimage destination; the city has a flourishing handloom industry. The investigators in the current research study, identified four rural villages and a random sample of 300 rural women of all age groups were selected for the study. The rural villages included for the study were Palur, Karumbakkam, Reddypalayam and Ayyangarkulam. The field trips took place in the month of August, 2016.

5.2 Pilot Study

The investigators administered a sample questionnaire and carried out a Pre-test. The study was done among 50 rural women in the villages of Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu in July, 2016. The study revealed that television was the most popular medium and the people hardly ever used the radio. All age groups spent most time with the TV. The women mentioned that they would be very interested in getting information regarding farming, agriculture, animal husbandry, education, weather, health, financial information from various media. As it is they did get some information through TV programmes and from self help groups.

5.3 Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

After having analysed what the 50 women had to say in the Pilot study, the following Methodology was adopted for the final study. Quantitative Methodology with the Survey was considered the most feasible method for

the present study. It is less oriented towards representatives and more towards finding associations and explanations, less towards description and more towards prediction, less lightly to ask ‘how many’, than ‘why’ and what goes with ‘what’.

Considering the above facts, the present study adopts the Descriptive Simple Survey Design. A simple survey was initially conducted to collect basic demographic information as well as to understand certain specific socio-cultural indicators. After this, in-depth questions were asked using an Interview Schedule in order to study the availability and usage of media in these villages.

6. FINDINGS:

Percentile analysis was largely used as the researchers were seeking very basic answers in order to understand the relationship between women and media in this study. Chi square test was done to find out if there was any significance between the Age & Education level of women and the Time spent on Media. After having statistically analyzed the data, the following results and interpretation has been done.

Table: 1

Age Groups	Frequency	Percent
15-25	93	31
26-35	89	30
36-45	67	22
46-55	32	11
55&above	19	6
Total	300	100

From the above table, it is revealed that most of the women involved in this study 31% were in the age group of 15-25 years. 30 % of them were in the category of 26-35 years. 22 % between 36-45 and 11% fall in the 46-55years and 6% between 55 and above category.

Table: 1.1

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
Upto 10th grade	128	43
Upto 12th grade	63	21
College educated	39	13
Illiterate	70	23
Total	300	100

The above table shows that most of the respondents (43%) have only done their primary education, i.e.10th grade. 21% of the respondents had done their secondary level education. Only 13% were college educated and 23.3% were illiterate.

Table: 1.2

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Weavers	27	9
Agriculturists	67	22
Others	206	69
Total	300	100

The above table shows that when it comes to occupation, 22% are involved in Farming and Agriculture while 9% are Weavers. 69% are engaged in other jobs such as Animal husbandry and Cattle rearing. Among these most were daily wage earners.

Table: 1.3

Family Income per month	Frequency	Percent
Upto 5000	98	33
5000 to 10000	108	36
Above 10000	94	31
Total	300	100

From the above table, it is inferred that 33% of the respondents have a family income of below Rs.5000 per month, 36% of them have a family income of Rs.5000 to 10000 while 31% earn above 10,000 per month but nobody crosses Rs. 15,000.

Table: 1.4

Family structure	Frequency	Percent
Joint Family	124	41
Nuclear Family	176	59
Total	300	100

From the above table it is revealed that majority of them (59%) are from nuclear families while the rest (41%) are from joint families.

Table 1.5: Media Ownership

Medium	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper/Magazines	17	6
Radio	27	9
Television	200	67
Mobile phone	43	14
Computer with Internet	13	4
Total	300	100

From the above table, it was interesting to note that in terms of media ownership, 67% of the respondents said they owned a TV set. While 14 % had a mobile phone only 4 % had internet connection. Only 9% owned a radio set and a mere 6 % had access to newspapers/magazines. All respondents whether they owned a TV set or not had access to television and most of the women spent hours watching TV. Very few people owned a computer or knew how to use one. It was surprising that very few houses owned a radio set. Many of them had not even heard of a radio. In fact, most of the respondents who have said they listen to the radio, listen to it on their mobile phones. Access to newspapers is poor as there is very scarce and infrequent delivery of newspapers in these regions. Many of the women were also illiterate.

Table 1.6: No. of hours spent reading Newspapers/Magazines

Hours	Frequency	Percent
0	202	67
> 1 hrs	56	19
1-3 hrs	33	11
< 3 hrs	9	3
Total	300	100

From the above table it is inferred that 67% do not read newspapers or magazines, 19% read for less than an hour, 11% watch for one to two hours and 3% read for more than three hours a day. This scarcity of reading has two main reasons. One is difficult to access reading material and the other is illiteracy.

Table 1.7: No. of hours spent using the Internet

Hours spent on Internet	Frequency	Percent
Do not use Internet	240	80
>1 hrs	42	14
1-3 hrs	14	5
<3 hrs	4	1
Total	300	100

From the above table it is found that 80% of the respondents do not use Internet, 14% use for less than an hour, 5% for 1 -3 hrs and only 1% use it for more than 3 hrs. As there is no Wifi or any other connectivity in rural areas, there is no basic facility to access the Internet. Few women who access, do it through their android phones using their own data cards.

Table 1.8: No of hrs spent listening to Radio

Time spent listening to radio	Frequency	Percent
Do not listen to radio	202	67
>1 hr	54	18
1-3 hrs	31	11
< 3 hrs	13	4
Total	300	100

From the above table it is inferred that 67 % do not listen to the radio at all, 18% listen for less than an hour, 11 % listen for 1 - 3 hrs and only 4% listen more than 3 hrs. It is important to note here that radio was listened to nearly always on the mobile phones. Many of them had not even heard of the radio and just a couple of households owned a traditional radio set.

Table 1.9 :Time spent watching TV

Time spent on watching TV	Frequency	Percent
Not watching TV	57	19
> 1 hr	46	15
1-3 hrs	104	35
< 3 hrs	93	31
Total	300	100

From the above table, it is seen that most of the women (35%) watch TV for 1-3 hrs in a day followed by 31% who watch more than 3 hours. 15.3% watch for approximately one hour per day. Out of the 19% who do not view TV, the reasons were dual. Either they never owned a set or they did not find time to view.

Table: 1.10: No. of hours spent using the Computer

Hours spent using computer	Frequency	Percent
Not using	242	81
>1 hr	40	13
1-3 hrs	16	5
< 3 hrs	2	1
Total	300	100

From the table, it is inferred that most of the respondents (81%) do not use computers. 13 % use it for less than 1 hr. 5% use between 1-3 hrs and only a meagre 1% use it for more than 3 hrs. In rural areas, a computer is hard to come by even today and owning a computer is a big deal. It is mainly the youngsters who use it either at school or college and maybe just a handful at their workplace.

Table 1.11: No. of hours spent viewing Cinema outside the home

No of hrs spent viewing cinema	Frequency	Percent
Do not view	170	57
Very rarely	72	24
Perhaps once a month	38	12
Once a week	20	7
Total	300	100

The above table shows that 57% of people do not go outside to theatres to watch movies. 24% watch very rarely, 12% watch movies at least once a month and only 7% watch at least once a week. Theatres are rare to come by and the infrequency of public transport is the main reason for this. Very few households own a two wheeler.

Table No 2: Information from Newspapers/Magazines

Information search from News Papers and Magazines

Types of information searched	Frequency	Percent
Do not search at all	66	22
Financial Information	29	10
Weather Related	20	7
Education	122	39
Health & Environment related	3	1
Dairy Production	3	1
Textile Weaving	8	3
Agriculture	15	5
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	34	12
Total	300	100

From the above table, it is seen that 22% do not use newspapers/magazines for any information as such, 39% of the respondents search for Educational information. 12% search for information related to Culture and 5% search for information on Agriculture. The rest 22% search in miniscule numbers for information on Financial details, Weather, Health, Environment, Dairy production & Weaving.

Table No 2.1: Information search on the Radio

Information search on the Radio		
Types of news searched for	Frequency	Percent
Do not search information through Radio	44	15
Financial Information	26	9
Weather Related	18	6
Education	169	55
Dairy Production	2	1
Textile Weaving	9	3
Agriculture	9	3
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	23	8
Total	300	100

From the above table it is inferred that the highest percentage of people (55%) access information on Education through radio, 9% access Financial information, 8% access information to programmes related to Culture, 6% listen to Weather related programmes and 1% use the radio for information on dairy production, textile weaving and agriculture. 15% do not use the radio for any sort of information at all.

Table No 2.2: Information search on Television		
Types of News searched for	Frequency	Percent
Do not search for information through TV	60	20
Financial Information	27	9
Weather Related	19	6
Education	146	49
Dairy Production	2	1
Textile Weaving	10	3
Agriculture	11	4
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	25	8
Total	300	100

The most amount of respondents (49%) search for information on Education through Television, 8% use TV to learn more about Culture related issues. 23% access for information on Weather, Finance, Dairy production, Textile Weaving and Agriculture. 20% do not search for any sort of information on the television.

Types of news searched for	Frequency	Percentage
No information searched for through Internet	55	18
Financial Information	28	9
Weather Related	15	5
Education	150	50
Dairy Production	2	2
Textile Weaving	9	3
Agriculture	16	5
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	25	8
Total	300	100

The above table shows that 50% of respondents access educational information through the Internet whereas 18 % do not access any information at all. 32% access financial information, weather, dairy production, textile weaving, agriculture and cultural relationships through Internet.

Types of news accessed	Frequency	Percent
Did not access information	95	30
Financial Information	23	8
Weather Related	12	4
Education	110	37
Health & Environment Related	1	1
Dairy Production	2	1
Textile Weaving	8	3
Agriculture	19	6
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	30	10
Total	300	100

From the above table, it is seen that 37% get information regarding educational programmes through the Panchayat and other local bodies, 10% get information on Culture, 8% on Financial issues, 6% on Agriculture and 4% on Weather, Health, Dairy Production and Textile weaving. 30% do not go to the Panchayat or any local bodies for information.

Types of news accessed	Frequency	Percent
No access of information through SHGs	60	20
Financial Information	24	8
Weather Related	13	4
Education	154	51
Health & Environment Related	1	1
Dairy Production	2	1
Textile Weaving	8	2
Agriculture	12	4
Culture (relationships, values & beliefs)	26	9
Total	300	100

The above table shows how self help groups prove to be instrumental in delivering messages to the public. It shows that 51% of respondents seek Educational information through SHGs, 9% access these groups for info on Culture and 8% for Financial information, The rest 12% access for information on weather, health and hygiene, dairy, animal husbandry, textile weaving and agriculture. 20% do not access SHGs.

Table No 2.6 Freedom for women to take family decisions

Decision making regarding family issues	Frequency	Percent
Yes	164	55
No	136	45
Total	300	100

From the above table we infer that 55% of women cannot make decisions regarding family issues whereas 45% have the liberty to make decisions for their families.

Table No 2.7 To analyze if women were free to take decisions for themselves

Free to take decisions for themselves	Frequency	Percent
Yes	180	60
No	120	40
Total	300	100

From the above table we infer that 40% do not have freedom to make decision by themselves and 60% have freedom to make decisions on their own.

Table No 2.8: Women owning Property/Assets in their name

Women owning property/assets in their name	Frequency	Percent
Yes	144	48
No	156	52
Total	300	100

From the above table it is seen that 52 % of the respondents do not own property or assets in their name whereas 48% own property or assets in their name.

Table No. 3: Association between Age and Time spent on media

Age	Age and Time spent on Media						Row Total
	Newspaper/Magazines	Radio	Television	Mobile phone	Internet	Going to the cinema	
15-25	5	12	45	9	7	15	93
26-35	5	6	49	15	2	12	89
36-45	6	7	33	10	0	11	67
46-55	1	2	17	3	2	7	32
Above 55	0	0	10	6	2	1	19
Column Total	17	27	154	43	13	46	300

Chi-Square Test			
Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.114 ^a	20	0.237
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 14 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .82.

Since p-value is less than 0.05, the variables are not associated. That is the time spent on media is independent with regards to the different age groups. Hence, there is no significant relationship between Age and Time Spent on Media.

Table No 3.1: Association between Level of Education and Time spent on media

Education Level	Education level and Time spent on Media						Row Total
	Newspaper/ Magazines	Radio	Television	Mobile phone	Internet	Watching movies	
Upto 10th grade	5	11	62	21	5	24	128
Upto 12th grade	6	8	32	7	2	8	63
College educated	3	4	19	2	5	6	39
Illiterate	3	4	41	13	1	8	70
Column Total	17	27	154	43	13	46	300
Chi-Square Tests							
Tests		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)			
Pearson Chi-Square		19.814 ^a	15	0.179			
N of Valid Cases		300					
a. 7 cells (29.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.69.							

Since p-value is less than 0.05, the variables are not associated. Hence, there is no significant relationship between the women's education level and time spent on media.

7. CONCLUSION:

The following are the conclusions drawn from the data that was collected and analysed. Most of the women (42.7%) who took part in the present study had only completed their primary education, i.e. 10th standard while just a minimal 13% had gone to college. 23% of the women who participated in the study were illiterate. Illiteracy is a problem our nation faces, even today, in spite of all the developmental initiatives.

When it came to family income, they were almost equally divided into those who earned below Rs. 5000 per month, those who earned between Rs. 5000 and Rs.10,000 and the least who earned just above Rs. 10,000 per month. Today, very obviously this is a very meagre income. Gender disparity is also prevalent these days both in urban and rural areas, and there is a gap in male and female literacy rates and this was seen in the current study as well. Most families could not afford to have all their children educated and if there was an option between a boy and a girl, the boy was the obvious choice for getting educated.

During the research it was observed that regional entertainment channels on TV were the most popular among the respondents from the rural areas. The reasons are two fold. One is that most of these channels broadcast TV serials highlighting the crucial realities of society which the women feel they can identify with. Secondly, there is plenty of entertainment which proves an excellent escape mechanism for these women and all this in a language that is clearly understood by them

According to George Gerbner and his colleagues who have specialised in TV research, television cultivates a common outlook or world view among its viewers. The more television a person watches, the more likely he or she is to accept the premises and facts of television reality as if these were everyday reality. For example, since violence is prevalent on television, heavy television viewers often overestimate the prevalence of violence in their lives. Gerbner refers to this process as mainstreaming (*Matei, Sorin Adam, 2012*) Surprisingly, only a handful of women listened to radio programs, that too mainly on their mobile phones. Most of the others had not even heard of a radio! There is a rapid spread of cellular phones in rural areas but only a few of them had an internet data card. Computers were a rare commodity in these villages. It was only the college going girls who were computer literate and who accessed the internet on their mobile phones.

When it came to searching for information from the media, Education was the most searched for category. The other areas were related to weather report, agriculture, weaving, animal husbandry, health & hygiene. In fact it was very obvious that the women were really thirsty for knowledge and they all had a great longing to be formally educated. Sensitization of humanity as a whole towards global concerns is required. Education is the only tool through

which this can be achieved and it is an effective tool for the upliftment of an individual /society. This is the only way to bring about prosperity. There has been a great deal of evidence in *Vedic* literature about the satisfactory status of women's education,¹⁷ but, as mentioned earlier and as seen in the results of the current study, very few families could afford to give their girls anything beyond a mere primary education.

Coming to the media from where this information was sought out, not surprisingly, newspapers and the Internet were the least popular because of their scarce usage. Information on financial loans from government schemes were accessed through Television and Self Help groups. Accessing information itself is an empowering process. A lot of the women got varied information from the local Panchayats (68.3%) and Self Help groups (80%).

Self Help Groups are very progressive in rural areas. Educational information for example, is easily accessible through these Groups. They are also very helpful in opening bank accounts for the illiterates. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), is what takes care of such needs for the rural poor. Many of the women from the villages taken for the present study belonged to such SHGs. Each SHG has been assigned a name and they promote various micro enterprises. They also arrange for loans to buy farm animals, or to buy a weaving loom, for instance.

As part of the study, it was imperative to find out how free or empowered these rural women were in their daily lives. It was revealed that 55% of them were part of the decision making process in their families, and 60% were free to make personal decisions without any male persons' permission. 48% of them also had property and assets in their name. Only if these kinds of qualitative distinctions are established, can the aggregate statistical results of large-scale, survey work be broken down into meaningful components. We need to focus on the complex ways in which television viewing is inextricably embedded in a whole range of everyday practices, and is itself partly constitutive of those practices (*Postil, John, 2010*). Ever since the early millenium, the growing recognition of the importance reception studies, specifically, in the case of analysing the domestic context of viewing television has been very evident (*Livingstone, Sonia, 2003*)

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