



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH IT ENABLED SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Rural development programs refer to all the interventions, usually implemented by the state or by aid agencies routed through the state agencies. In Indian context, these generally include policies and attempts made for alleviating the socio-economic conditions of the poor in the villages or developing backward areas. Before rural development can be successful, the important role of women has to be acknowledged. Moreover, they have to be fully integrated. Though the Government of India declared year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men', but still to recognize women as the driving force for rural development. The existing models of farmer field school and farmer-to-farmer learning approaches have yet to recognize women from taking advantage of such technology transfer approaches. It is important to explore the concept of increasing rural women's skills as technology trainers and knowledge providers in the rural areas. In-depth assessments of the roles and constraints faced by rural women in different circumstances should be undertaken in order to guide the development and application of appropriate technologies. Training should build according to their capacity and should be tied together to improve rural women's access to technical information. Thus the paper brings out the concept of Force field analysis in managing the E-Education among rural women, and their standards of living. The idea is to diffuse the concept of E-Education/ innovation among rural women in making them more self independent, self-employed efficient, which inturn helps in the process of E-Governance.

KEYWORDS: *Rural Development, Women Empowerment, E-Education, Force Field analysis, E-Governance.*

INTRODUCTION

A large number of studies have shown that even today approximately 70% of Indian Population lives in Rural Areas. Today, Rural Development is essential for the development of the Indian Economy. Indian Government has realized the role of the rural development and the contribution of I.T. in the development of Rural Markets. A large number of projects are introduced in the rural area with many upcoming projects in pipeline; which are likely to be introduced by the Government in the short span of time. The Rural Market of India is showing an impressive growth largely due to changing lifestyle patterns, better communication network and rapidly changing demand structure of consumers of rural area. With the changing patterns of Rural Market, the role of I.T. has increased from providing only the Networks to set-up the basis of updated technological programs in the rural area. In Rural India, Government has already provided Info-kiosks (a rural version of cyber café) which provide basic communication facilities like internet connection and telecommunication services. Modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) were found to have great potential to contribute. The projects of Info- Kiosks are very popular in the region of Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh and have shown a positive response in the development of the rural area. Government is taking serious steps for the development of the rural market, under which the activities related to the development of the rural infrastructure, subsidized food availability and rural employment schemes are at the priority. I.T. plays a major role in accurate implementing these developmental programs in the rural area. Government has set up various centers which are spreading the I.T. web in the rural area through which people can be benefited and exploit the resources available efficiently. Government of India is meticulously focusing on rural development programs which refer to all the interventions, usually implemented by the state or by aid agencies routed through the state agencies. In Indian context, these generally include policies and attempts made for alleviating the socio-economic conditions of the poor in the villages or developing backward areas. Before rural development can be successful, the important role of women has to be acknowledged. Moreover, they have to be fully integrated. Though the Government of India declared year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men', but still to recognize women as the driving force for rural development. In March, 2005, the Government of India decided to amend the Factories Act 1948, to allow the women to work in night shifts. The amendment proposed would greatly benefit women working in Special Economic Zone and IT sector.

OBJECTIVES

Thus, this paper attempt,

1. To assess the role of information Technology in women empowerment.

2. To find out the application of Information Technology in women empowerment and Micro-finance.
3. Application of Force field analysis in managing the E-Education among rural women.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on the primary as well as secondary data. The primary data include rigorous discussion with the IT Experts, NGO's, Self Help group, sociologist, Economists, and other academicians. Secondary data include the published and non published literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been not many books or literature review on the present topic though much of the work has been done on women empowerment in other sectors. The following are some of the studies that proposed their thought on it.

1. A study M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation Chennai, India on Assessment of Impact of Information Technology on Rural Areas of India, The project was for taking the benefits of emerging and frontier technologies to the rural poor. Recommended for establishing an accounts transaction system using the data network operated by rural women.
2. Carmelo cannarella valeria piccioni,2009, in the article on innovation diffusion and territorial inertia, talks on the difficulties in developing and implementing innovative processes in a rural area can result from a number of obstacles impeding the diffusion of innovation among local agents whose causes, types and sizes can be of very different nature.
3. B. Yasodha Jagadeeswari and T.S. Kalyani, Asia Pacific Journal of Research in Business Management,Year : 2010, Volume : 1, Issue : 2, emphasis on Information and communication technologies (ICT) are central to the creation of a global knowledge-based economy and society. ICT can play an especially important role in accelerating growth, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in developing and transition economy countries and in facilitating their beneficial integration into the global economy. Information and knowledge are playing a lead role in the world economy today in the post-industrial or advanced industrial society comparable to that of traditional production factors in the past, such as steam or electricity. They focused on the improved use of information and communication technologies; women can broaden the scope of their actions and address issues which are previously beyond their capacity. ICTs have thus the potential to digitally link each and every woman in the world in a star topology network which opens up endless possibilities for information exchange. This mechanism could be used by women in creative ways, both to communicate with other people who are online, and also to disseminate information to people in the outside world who are not online through the use of convergence and hybrid technologies such as community emails, community radio broadcast, tele-centres, newsletter, videos, etc.
4. George Mathew, 2007, International Journal of Rural Management, 3(2), 2007, focused on women development as a unique contribution. His idea was to make women more efficient

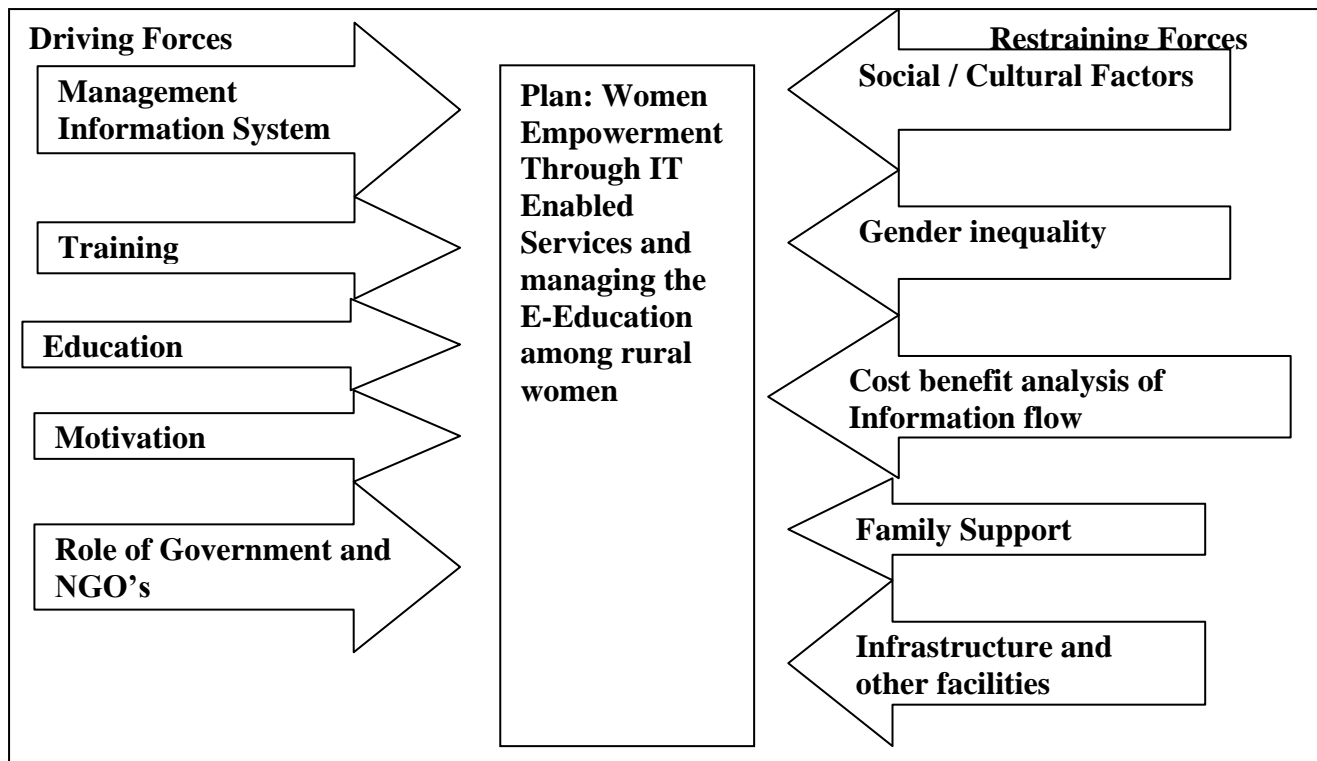
in order to enable them to support their families in the rural context. The biggest impact in this respect was made through the 'Women in Agriculture' projects—Women Youth Extension Training Programme (WYTEP) in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture (TANWA) in Tamil Nadu, Training and Extension for Women in Agriculture (TEWA) in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh Women in Agriculture (MAPWA) in Madhya Pradesh.

5. Dr. J.S. Giri Rao, DR. S.N. Pattnaik (2006), The media scenario in India has undergone a spectacular change since Independence. From the days of bullock cart, we have traveled down the modern age of satellite technology and cyberspace. The country has been witnessing a revolution in communication technology. With the launching of grass roots democratic structures, followed by vigorous efforts to implement Right to Information, Rural Health Mission, Drinking Water Mission, Rural Electrification, Rural Employment, Empowerment of Women, and renewed enthusiasm to spread the light of Literacy, the mass media is now at an advantageous position to meet the challenges of rural uplift in this 21st century. The Indian economy is pre-dominantly rural. More than 72 per cent of the Indian population reside in villages and rural areas. Rural women are a vital part of Indian economy and one-third of national labour force and a major contributor to the survival of the family. Government is making continued efforts to provide equitable growth opportunities to rural women by the ways of empowerment and upgrading the information infrastructure in rural and remote areas. The recent boom in satellite television combined with government's decentralization policy in telecommunication sector has been in the process of transforming the rural information and communication infrastructure to a great extent. In this paper, a detail study has been carried out how the telecom media has been flourishing and contributing towards the rural development process in India.
6. Manish K. Thakur, 2007, highlighted representing village: text and context of rural development programmes in India, The village becomes a marker of social difference in the overall context of development and modernization. Rural development is the medium in which village is placed in relation to national development. More often than not, village in contemporary times turns out to be a 'governmentalized locality'.
7. Dr. Rekha Prasad, Faculty of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University, The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal, 13(1), Article 8 highlighted the importance of making women economically powerful, especially in the Indian context. In India the birth of a girl child is still considered as a misfortune for the family and often eliminated in her mother's womb. This paper suggests that one solution to this problem is to make a girl child economically strong and at the same time her traditional role as a home maker is also not affected. Information and Communication Technology alongside a knowledge based service sector offers the empowerment tool that women require.

APPLICATION OF IT IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Most microfinance programs target women with the explicit goal of empowering them. However, their underlying premises are different. Some argue that women are amongst the poorest. Others believed that investing in women's capabilities empowers them to make choices, which will contribute to greater economic growth and development.

Some issues that needs further investigation is whether microfinance reinforce women's traditional roles or promote gender equality. Government of India has taken a large initiative in empowering rural women through SHGs, Agricultural resources, forest resources, but not much has been done in the application of IT Enabled services in rural women empowerment. Therefore the paper emphasis on developing a conceptual framework in the light of information required for the application of IT in the rural women empowerment which may in fact help women to gain respect and achieve more in their socially defined roles, which in turn may lead to increased esteem and self-confidence. Although increased self-confidence does not automatically lead to empowerment, it may contribute decisively to a woman's ability and willingness to challenge the social injustices and discriminatory systems that they face. This implies that as women become financially better-off their self confidence and bargaining power. There is an important role of Information Technology in the field of women empowerment such empowerment could easily be seen higher in the Urban area as compared to the rural area. There is high time for providing training in the rural areas with the support of the administration for strengthening the National Computer literacy Mission. The use and application of Information technology in e-ticketing, online services, etc may also be disseminated in the rural areas so that the rural women could understand the working and functioning of the Micro-Finance Institutions. There must be the provision of allocation of budget and funding in the Ministry and also in the Planning commission for testing conceptual framework at the grass root level to assess the effectiveness of Information Technology in empowering women through Micro finance. However, there are many factors affecting this process. The below diagram depicts the driving as well as restraining forces affecting women empowerment in rural India in imparting information technology.



1.1 FIGURE –APPLICATION OF FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS IN MANAGING THE E-EDUCATION AMONG RURAL WOMEN

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

Force Field Analysis is a simple but powerful technique for building an understanding of the forces that will drive and resist a proposed transform. The above force field diagram is derived from the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. The above diagram helps to understand the variables/ forces involved in planning and implementing a program affecting the women empowerment and will undoubtedly be of use in many more rural development projects,

These forces can be positive, urging us toward a behavior, or negative, propelling us away from a behavior. A force field diagram portrays these driving forces and restraining forces that affect a central question or problem. A force field diagram can be used to compare any kind of opposites, actions and consequences, different points of view, and so on.

DRIVING FORCES

Driving forces are those forces affecting a situation that are pushing in a particular direction; In terms of women empowerment through IT include MIS, Education, training, Motivation and Role of Government and NGO's.

RESTRAINING FORCES

Restraining forces are forces acting to restrain or decrease the driving forces are Social / cultural Factors, Gender Inequality, Cost benefit analysis of Information flow, Family support and Infrastructure and other facilities.

In the context of process of women empowerment, driving forces could be seen as pushing for change while restraining forces stand in the way. A force field diagram is used to analyze these opposing forces and set the stage for making transform possible. The process will not occur when either the driving forces or restraining forces are equal, or the restraining forces are stronger than the driving forces. For implementation to be possible, the driving forces must overcome the restraining forces. Usually, the most effective way to do this it to diminish or remove restraining forces. It can be tempting to try strengthening the driving forces instead, but this tends to intensify the opposition at the same time. Therefore the government initiative as well as the role of social and cultural forces plays a vital role in indentifying the role of women empowerment through IT. In the short run, output will tend to be lowered still further. However, if commitment to objectives and technical know-how of the group are increased in the long run, they may become new driving forces, and that, along with the elimination or decrease in the restraining forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are few concepts of IT that will benefit the rural women for their better prospects and participation.

EDUCATION

Apart from traditional class room education, setting up virtual class room using video conferencing will increase their involvement in education. By increasing literacy level in the rural parts will definitely make tremendous changes in the future.

TRAINING CENTERS

Government and NGO's are organizing different kinds of trainings like Tailoring, Mushroom

cultivation, Ornamental fish culture breeding techniques, Preparation of Agarbathi, Pickles, Jam. Depending upon the literacy level Computer training can be provided and they have to be motivated to have internet browsing centers, Desk Top Publishing centers. Providing training on Internet and email services will be very useful for expanding their business to local, national as well as international level.

MIS FOR SELF HELP GROUP

Self help group has become popular in rural parts of India. Most of the groups started small scale industries and delivering good quality goods / services to the consumers. Developing a web based information system about the SHG and providing more information about the various related details (i.e., training details, financial support, marketing, Government policies, etc), will help other groups to communicate and enhance their business activity relevant to their expertise. Incorporating a Management Information System, tracking the progress and functions of the groups are some of the other important things where the IT applications can be very useful.

ALLOCATION OF BUDGET

There must be the provision of allocation of budget and funding in the Ministry and also in the Planning commission for testing conceptual framework at the grass root level to assess the affectivity of Information Technology in empowering women and Micro finance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the scope of Information technology in women empowerment and Micro finance it could be concluded that there is an important role of information technology in the field of women empowerment. In other words, the role of IT enabled services can prove beneficial in raising the social status of the family through better education. It can be identified as a tool for women empowerment creating financial and small savings related awareness in the rural areas. On the whole, the social and economic condition of the person is strengthened through micro-financial support.

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