

Reprint

ISSN 1997-2571 (Web Version)

Journal of Innovation & Development Strategy (JIDS)

(J. Innov. Dev. Strategy)

Volume: 11

Issue: 3

December 2017

J. Innov. Dev. Strategy 11(3): 12-16 (December 2017)

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USE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNEL IN INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES BY THE WOMEN BENEFICIARIES OF BRAC

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Accepted for publication on 26 November 2017

ABSTRACT

Begum MM, Alam MA, Mondol MAS, Rahman MS, Islam SMABS (2017) Use of communication channel in income generating activities by the women beneficiaries of BRAC. *J. Innov. Dev. Strategy*. 11(3), 12-16.

The main purpose of this study was to determine the use of communication channel in income generating activities (IGAs) by the women beneficiaries of BRAC and to explore its relationships with the selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries of BRAC. Data were collected through personal interview by using interview schedule from a sample of 83 women beneficiaries selected by multi-stage random sampling procedure from three unions of sadar upazila of Dinajpur district during 15 March to 16 April 2016. The use of communication channel was determined on three dimensions viz. contact, interaction and application and finally the overall use of communication channel by the women beneficiaries was determined. Overall use of communication channel could range from 15 to 74, against the possible score of 0 to 90. The highest proportion (39.8 percent) of the women had medium use of communication channel compared to 37.3 percent had high use and 22.9 percent had low use. The findings revealed that more than three-fourths (77.1 percent) of the farmers had medium to high use of communication channel in receiving IGAs related information. Among the ten selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries, six like educational qualification, daily time use, training received, attitude towards NGOs, participation in income generating activities and innovativeness showed significant positive relationship with their use of communication channel while their age, family size, annual income and credit received had no relationships.

Key words: communication channel, women beneficiaries, income generating activities

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is agriculture based country and about 25.7 percent of population is engaged in agriculture for their livelihood (BBS 2012). Bangladesh is the largest deltaic country with a population of 144.04 million with an area of 1,47,569.06 square kilometers. Population density is 1015 persons per square kilometer. The per capita annual income is about US \$ 923 and its people have a life expectancy of 69 year (BBS 2013). According to 2012-2013 Fiscal Year, agriculture represents directly and indirectly almost 18.70 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 47.3 percent of its employment opportunity.

Economic independence is one of the means to empower the women. The existence of women in a state of economic, political, social and knowledge disempowerment is known to be a major hindrance to economic development. Income is the most important factor for human well being as well as the living standard, health status, social and political power (Mondal *et al.* 2009). Participation of rural women in Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) activities is expected to bring about positive impact on the lives of the participants (Rashid 2001).

After the independence of Bangladesh, activities of the Non-Government Organization (NGOs) have been started with relief work in the country. Income generating activities are considered as those initiatives that affect the economic aspects of people's lives through the use of credit, technology and training, which are being fulfilled by the three programs like agriculture, microfinance and enterprise (Rashid 2012).

As women constitute half of the population a country, active participation of them is of crucial importance for the success of any development program. Women are the inconvenient class of the society. For many landless families the homestead is the only land resources for production. But due to inadequate knowledge, skill and opportunity, they are unable to participate in IGAs and cannot earn maximum productivity from homestead resources. BRAC mostly deal with landless women, the detrimental class of the society. Many activities like homestead gardening, crop cultivation, livestock rearing, mat making etc. have been considered as IGAs for women in order to receive returns and achieve empowerment. The major objectives of these activities are i) to improve food consumption and nutrition, ii) to generate income and employment for the women, iii) to increase production and iv) to promote decision making ability of the rural women.

The main focal point of the study is to determine the use of communication channels by the women beneficiaries of BRAC in IGAs. The finding of the study may provide valuable guidelines for the policy maker of the BRAC and other government and non-government organizations for improved program management for the upliftment of rural women have implication for other area of the country. Keeping in view of the above circumstances, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To determine and describe the personal selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries of BRAC. The selected characteristics are: age, educational qualification, family size, annual family income, daily time use, credit received, training received, attitude towards NGOs, participation in income generating activities and innovativeness.

2. To determine and describe the use of communication channel by the women beneficiaries of BRAC in IGAs.
3. To explore the relationship between the selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries of BRAC with their use of communication channel.

METHODOLOGY

The research was done in Sadar upazila of Dinajpur district purposively. Sadar upazila consists of 10 unions in which three unions namely Chehelgazi, Fazilpur and Shekhpura were selected randomly. All the women beneficiaries of BRAC under these three unions consisting of 332 were considered as population of the study. A list of these women beneficiaries was collected from the respective BRAC office. Out of this population, a sample of 83 women beneficiaries (25 percent) was selected by multi-stage random sampling technique. Due to the possibility of unavailability of the selected respondents, a reserve list of nine women (about 10 percent) was made to substitute the missing respondents during interview. Data were collected during 15 March to 16 April 2016.

Measurement of variables

The ten selected characteristics of the women namely age, educational qualification, family size, annual family income, daily time use, credit received, training received, attitude towards NGOs, participation in income generating activities and innovativeness were considered as independent variables of the study. The independent variables were measured by following standard scales and scoring system.

Use of communication channels by the women beneficiaries of BRAC was the dependent variable of this study. Ten commonly used communication channels were selected to measure the use of communication channels by BRAC women beneficiaries' considering three dimensions namely, contact, interaction and application. Each of the dimensions was measured separately with four point rating scale against ten selected communication channels. The measurement was calculated by adopting the modified formula of Mondol (2009).

Contact with information sources

Scores were separately assigned for each of the information sources on the basis of the response of the women beneficiaries of BRAC in such a way that 0 (zero) was assigned for none, 1 for low, 2 for moderate and 3 for high contact. The contact with the information sources by the women was therefore determined by adding the score against the 10 selected information channels.

Interaction with other channels on the received information

In measuring the interaction with the channels on the received information, scores were separately assigned for each of the information channels on the basis of the response of the women beneficiaries of BRAC in such a way that 0 (zero) was assigned for none, 1 for low, 2 for moderate and 3 for high interaction. The interaction with the information channels by the women was therefore determined by adding the score against the 10 selected information channels.

Application of received information

In measuring the application of received information, scores were also separately assigned for each of the 10 information sources on the basis of application of received information in such a way that 0 (zero) was assigned for none, 1 for low (1-33 percent application), 2 for moderate (34-66 percent application) and 3 for high (67-100 percent application).

Overall use of communication channel

The overall use of communication channel by the women beneficiaries of BRAC was determined by above mentioned three dimensions. In this purpose assigned score of 10 information channel for each dimension is summated, so overall use of communication channel could range from 0 to 90, where 0 indicate none use of communication channel and 90 indicate highest use of communication channel.

Collected data was coded, categorized and analyzed as per the objectives of the study. Different descriptive statistics were calculated like mean, standard deviation etc. Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient was used to examine the relationships of the characteristics (independent variables) of the respondents with their use of communication sources (dependent variables) SPSS version 17 was used for analyzing the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the women beneficiaries of BRAC

Many characteristics of women beneficiaries may have influence to their use of communication channels. However, only 10 characteristics are included in this study by reviewing the previous literature. It was assumed that use of communication channel by the women beneficiaries in IGAs would vary according to their various characteristics and these characteristics were considered as the independent variables for correlation analysis. The salient features of the different characteristics have been presented in Table 1.

Findings revealed that the highest proportions (56.6 percent) of the respondents were middle aged compared to 22.9 percent young aged and 20.5 percent were old aged. Majority (48.2 percent) of the respondents possessed educational qualification of secondary level where as 26.5 percent under primary level and only 10.8 percent under above secondary level categories. About three-fourth (74.7 percent) of the women had medium family size, 16.9 percent had small family size, and only 8.4 had large family size. The highest proportion (59.0 percent) of the respondents had medium income, while 20.5 percent had low income and rest of them (20.5 percent) had high income. The highest portion (67.5 percent) of the respondents was under medium daily time use category and 21.7 percent were under short daily time use category and only 10.8 percent were under short daily time use category.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of selected characteristics of women beneficiaries of BRAC

Characteristics	Scoring method	Range		Categories	Respondents		Mean	SD
		Possible	Observed		No.	%		
Age	No. of year	Unknown	19-60	Young aged (up to 26)	19	22.9	35.07	8.67
				Middle aged (27-44)	47	56.6		
				Old aged (>44)	17	20.5		
Educational qualification	Year of schooling	Unknown	0.5-14	Can sign only (0.5)	12	14.5	6.33	3.84
				Primary level (1-5)	22	26.5		
				Secondary level (6-10)	40	48.2		
				Above secondary (>10)	9	10.8		
Family size	No. of members	Unknown	2-14	Small (up to 3)	14	16.9	5.23	2.27
				Medium (4-8)	62	74.7		
				Large (above 8)	7	8.4		
Annual income	('000' Tk.)	Unknown	11.50-121	Low (up to 32)	17	20.5	55.49	23.29
				Medium (32.1-78)	49	59.0		
				High (above 78)	17	20.5		
Daily time use	Score	0-21	5-18	Short (up to 9)	18	21.7	12.12	3.03
				Medium (10-15)	56	67.5		
				Long (>15)	9	10.8		
Credit received	('000' Tk.)	Unknown	10-69	Low (up to 23)	16	19.3	35.80	13.12
				Medium (23.1-48)	50	60.2		
				High (above 48)	17	20.5		
Training received	No. of days	Unknown	0-10	No training (0)	52	62.7	1.45	2.56
				Short (up to 2)	10	12.0		
				Medium (3-5)	14	16.9		
				Long (above 5)	7	8.4		
Attitude towards NGOs	Score	8-40	8-38	Less favorable (up to 30)	4	4.8	34.25	1.98
				Moderately favorable (31-33)	19	22.9		
				Highly favorable (above 33)	60	72.3		
Participation in IGAs	Score	0-27	0-24	Low (Up to 8)	12	14.5	12.57	5.02
				Medium (9-17)	62	74.7		
				High (>17)	9	10.8		
Innovativeness	Score	0-30	0-25	Low (up to 6)	18	21.7	12.20	6.51
				Medium (7-18)	53	63.9		
				High (above 18)	12	14.5		

Highest proportion (60.2 percent) of the respondents get medium amount of credit, while 19.3 percent get low amount of credit and 20.5 percent get high amount of credit. Most of the respondent (62.7 percent) had no training, 12.0 percent had short duration training, 16.9 percent had medium duration training and only 8.4 percent had long duration training.

Highest proportion (72.3 percent) of the respondents had highly favorable attitude, 22.9 percent had moderately favorable and only 4.8 percent had less favorable attitude towards NGOs. About three-fourth (74.7 percent) of the women had medium participation in income generating activities, 14.5 percent had low participation and only 10.8 had high participation. The highest proportion (63.9 percent) of the respondents had medium innovativeness, 21.7 percent had low innovativeness and on the other hand, 14.5 percent had high innovativeness.

Use of communication channel by the women beneficiaries

Contact with the information sources

The contact with the information sources scores of the women beneficiaries ranged from 6 to 28 against the possible range of 0 to 30. The mean and standard deviation were 19.48 and 5.66, respectively. The respondents

were classified into three categories such as low (up to 14), medium (15 to 25) and high (above 19) on the basis of their contact score on the selected information sources (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their overall contact

Categories	Women beneficiaries		Observed range	Mean	SD
	Number	Percent			
Low contact (up to14)	20	24.10	6-28	19.48	5.66
Medium contact (15-25)	53	63.90			
High contact (above 25)	10	12.00			
Total	83	100.00			

Data contained in Table 2 indicate that the highest proportion (63.90 percent) of the women beneficiaries had medium contact with information sources, while 24.10 percent had low and 12 percent had high contact with information sources. The finding also reveals that slightly more than three-fourths (75.90 percent) of the women had medium to high contact with the information sources for the information related IGAs. This finding implies that the women had considerable amount of contact with the information sources.

Interaction with other channels on the received information

The interaction with the information channels score considering 10 selected information sources of the BRAC women beneficiaries ranged from 5 to 25 against a possible range of 0 to 30, the mean being 17.10 and standard deviation 5.12. The women beneficiaries were also classified into three categories namely low interaction (up to 12), medium interaction (13 to 22) and high interaction (above 22) on the basis of their interaction scores (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their overall interaction

Categories	Women beneficiaries		Observed range	Mean	SD
	Number	Percent			
Low interaction (up to12)	20	24.1	5-25	17.10	5.12
Medium interaction (13-22)	51	61.4			
High interaction (above 22)	12	14.5			
Total	83	100.00			

The findings indicate that the majority (61.40 percent) of the women had medium interaction with the information sources while 24.10 percent had low and 14.50 percent had high interaction on the IGAs. The finding reveals that slightly more than three-fourths (75.9 percent) of the women had medium to high interaction of information. This finding implies that women did considerable amount of interaction with the information sources.

Application of the information

The application of information scores of the respondents ranged from 4 to 21 against a possible range of 0 to 30, the average being 14.57 and standard deviation of 4.69. The women beneficiaries were classified into three categories namely low application (up to 14), medium application (15 to 25) and high application (>25) on the basis of their information application score (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to their overall application

Categories	Women beneficiaries		Observed range	Mean	SD
	Number	Percent			
Low application (up to14)	20	24.1	4-21	14.57	4.69
Medium application (15-25)	49	59.0			
High application (>25)	14	16.9			
Total	83	100.00			

The findings indicated that the highest proportion (59.00 percent) of the women had medium application of information, while about 24.1 percent had low application and 16.9 percent had high application. The finding implies that four fifths (79.90 percent) of the women had medium to high application of information. This means that the farmers' application of information was satisfactory.

Overall use of communication channel

The observed overall use of communication channel scores of the women ranged from 15 to 74, against the possible score of 0 to 90. The mean and standard deviation were 51.14 and 15.27, respectively. The respondents were classified into three categories namely low (up to 14), medium (15 to 25) and high (above 45) on the basis of their use of communication channel score (Table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to their overall use of communication channel

Categories	Women beneficiaries		Observed range	Mean	SD
	Number	Percent			
Low use (up to 14)	19	22.9	15-74	51.14	15.27
Medium use (15-25)	33	39.8			
High use (above 25)	31	37.3			
Total	83	100.00			

The highest proportion (39.8 percent) of the women had medium use of information channel compared to 37.3 percent had high and 22.9 percent had low use. The findings revealed that more than three-fourths (77.1 percent) of the respondents had medium to high use of information channel in receiving IGA related information. Therefore, it can be said that the communication channels play a significant role in diffusion of IGA related information among the women beneficiaries.

Relationships between characteristics of the women and their use of communication channel

The relationship between selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries of BRAC (independent variables) and their use of communication channel (dependent variable) have been presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Relationships between the dependent and independent variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Computed values of 'r' with 81df	Tabulated value of 'r'	
			0.05 level	0.01 level
Use of communication channel	Age	0.047	± 0.219	±0.284
	Educational qualification	0.225*		
	Family size	0.152		
	Annual income	0.013		
	Daily time use	0.265*		
	Credit received	0.062		
	Training received	0.352**		
	Attitude towards NGOs	0.260*		
	Participation in income generating activities	0.396**		
	Innovativeness	0.423**		

Among the ten selected characteristics of the women beneficiaries six like educational qualification, daily time use, training received, attitude towards NGOs, participation in income generating activities and innovativeness showed significant positive relationship with their use of communication channel while women beneficiaries' age, family size, annual income and credit received showed no significant relationships with the use of communication channel.

CONCLUSION

Communication channels offer the ability to increase the amount of information provided to the users. The more will be the need of the information from the communication channels more will be the use. These channels play significant role in diffusion of income generating activities related information among the women beneficiaries in this study. The educational qualifications, daily time use, training received, attitude towards NGOs, participation in income generating activities and innovativeness may be important determining factors for use of communication channels. These factors need to be highlighted and considered for diffusion of income generative activities.

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