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IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

“Just as a bird cannot fly with one wing only, a nation would not march further if women are left behind.” (Singh 2008). Women are the base for all round development venture. No nation can develop without the development of women. Women, the reservoir of productive human resource constitutes almost half of the country’s total population. Women perform a multiplicity of roles to make critical contribution to family, health and sustainable development in our country. As a mother, she shapes the personality and character of her children and thereby the character of the nation. As a house wife, she maintains the productivity of the human capital with in her household through proper home management. She is pivotal in society’s social, cultural, educational and economic programmes. By catering to physical, emotional and moral needs of the members, women gives meaning to life, provides a suitable environment for the growth of personality and refines the life of citizens. In India, women are the central figure of family life. Present paper aim is to discuss the role of nutritional education for women empowerment.

Key words : Nutritional Education, women

Introduction

Women have strong potential role in many aspects of economic development in relation to their family responsibilities as well as their agricultural production activities. According to **Chakravarti (1975)** the work done by women in home and farm contributes as much as half of the economic development of the country. The labour force participation rate of women is 22.7 per cent, less than half of the men's rate of 51.6 per cent. In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5 per cent of the total female labour. (**Sustainable Development Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation, 2009**).

Importance of Education

The women in rural area are deprived of minimum facilities of enlightenment and education. Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. The literacy rate in women is very low. According to Census 2001, female literacy rate is 54.16 per cent and the female illiteracy rate is 62 per cent whereas, male illiteracy rate is 42 per cent. There is a proverb saying **“Educate a man, you will educate but one, educate a women, you will educate a nation.”** It is to remember developmental trilogy Nutrition, Health and Education depend on Women to a large extent.

Nutritional status of women

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) was 301 per 1000,000 live births during 2001-03 mainly among pregnant women and under nourished, malnourished women (**Patel 2008**). Frequent pregnancies, coupled with poor diets result in anaemia and women fall ill more frequently than men, but avail of medical facilities more infrequently. All these result in a reduced life span of women. The most vulnerable groups who suffered from these nutrient deficiencies and their consequences were



preschool children, pregnant and lactating women especially in rural area (**Rao 2007**). Pregnancy is crucial stage in women's life from the nutrition point of view (**Saibaba 1985**). During pregnancy a woman is responsible to provide good nutrition for two individuals. The growing baby gets all its nourishment from its mother through the umbilical cord, so diet is very important. If the mother is lacking in any vitamin and nutrients, her baby might be mentally retarded. Women who consume minimal amounts over the eight week period have a higher mortality or disorder rate concerning their offspring than women who eat regularly, because children born to well-fed mothers had less restriction within the womb. According to **World Bank (1993)** about one third of the total disease burden in developing country of women between 15-45 years of age is linked to health problems related to pregnancy, child birth, abortion and reproduction tract infection. Not only are physical disorders been linked with poor nutrition before and during pregnancy, but neurological disorders and handicaps are a risk that is run by mothers, who are mal-nourished, a condition which can also lead to the child becoming more susceptible to later degenerative diseases. Poor nutrition that continues into pregnancy and lactation leads to Low Birth Weight (LBW) babies, infant's death, and progressive growth retardation of children. According to the diet survey, there is a shortage of the nourished diet in the women of rural area. In reference of Indian Council of Medical Research the comparison of the figure of pregnant women is very low and irrelevant nutritive rate is very high, which results to a delivery of unhealthy and low weight baby (**Kavita 2003**). Consequences of anaemia during pregnancy include increased risk of maternal and infant death, premature delivery and LBW. There is a higher risk for both mother and child if the mother has little education, a poor household and rural residence. Impact of various micronutrient deficiencies in India has second rank for low birth weight baby. Low birth weight baby include infants born prematurely or with intrauterine growth retardation. Maternal illiteracy and low socio economic status have been shown to be major risk factors for intrauterine growth retardation (**Muthayya and Kurpad 2007**). Maternal weight, Maternal undernutrition, Maternal Body Mass Index are associated with high number of Low Birth Weight, LBW is associated with poor growth during infancy and childhood and high non communicable disease in adult life (**Ramachandran 2007**).

Role of media in Nutritional Education

Eapen (2000) stressed that the traits of traditional media are important for bringing about social change in developing nations. These media are comparatively cheap. They do not have to be imported and therefore involve no foreign exchange. **Kumar et. al. (2000)** produced video film on prevention and control of vitamin A deficiency. The film was used for nutritional education among middle school children of Bhimtal; India. There was 45.37 per cent gain in knowledge. **Kaur and Verma (2000)** conducted a study in Hissar district where the media combination selected for the study included charts, flip charts, flash charts and leaflets with the combination of method demonstration. It was found that demonstration plus flip charts was the most effective media combination and demonstration plus leaflets was found least effective. It was concluded that all the media were not equally effective for imparting knowledge regarding energy saving technology. **Pandey and Khanna (2000)** discovered that out of the three modes selected i.e. discussion, interview and informal dialogue; the discussion mode was better both in terms of gain and retention and was better than groups exposed to informal dialogue. **Retnowati (2000)** reported that poster is one of communication media useful for information dissemination of conservation farm. The research intended to find out the combination pattern effect of picture and poster text on the increasing of farmer's knowledge of conservation farm. Picture and text combination pattern poster using combination of photograph and dominant picture is quite effective in increasing knowledge of conservation farm in Imogiri sub district Bantul regency. **Agrawal and Kumar (2001)** concluded that video cassette is highly effective in imparting nutritional education to adolescent



girls on prevention and control of anaemia, a nutritional problem of great concern in India. Video Film may also be useful for imparting nutritional education to the entire community on matters related to prevention and control of iron deficiency anaemia. Video film is becoming popular among increasing population everywhere including hill areas. **Begum (2001)** reported that print media is one of the most effective channels for imparting health and nutritional information. The developed booklet and three folders were found as most effective because they contain pictures with short printed message through printed words. **Haque and Kumar (2001)** reported that training method with chart/poster was much more understandable and it was also more effective in increasing knowledge, resulting in adoption of practices for high yielding rice cultivators. **Yahaya (2001)** used a multimedia communication strategy with combination of various media recognized the religious, cultural and socio economic diversity of the target audience. Findings showed that it resulted in increase in knowledge of the people in the intervention communities especially on meaning and methods of the spread of AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome), as well as ability to identify various methods of birth control. Television, outreach programmes, radio and drama series are considered as the most appropriate or influential and effective multimedia channels. **Bhati (2002)** found that the visual perception of the flip book was good and comprehension was poor in pretest. In post test, visual perception was very good and comprehension was found to be excellent. **Atwal and Bellorkar (2005)** concluded that the lecture plus demonstration was found to be more effective media followed by electronic media and the print media respectively used in the intervention programme on post natal care. **Shehrawat et. al. (2005)** concluded that farmers gained maximum knowledge when the improved sugarcane farm technology was communicated through visual plus discussion and gained minimum knowledge through lecture plus discussion. The researcher further reported that the visual plus discussion mode of presentation for dissemination of sugarcane technology to the farmers was found to be most effective followed by printed material plus discussion, group meeting plus discussion and lecture plus discussion method was found least effective. Therefore, the farmers should update through these extension teaching methods rather than simply delivering the lecture and lecture should be short and followed by group discussion and more emphasis should be on audio-visual aids. The training regarding preparation and use of improved quality audio-visual aids should be imparted to extension field functionaries so that they can use gained skill in transfer of the latest technology to the farmers. **Srivastava et. al. (2005)** reported that mean scores increased greatly at post exposure stage when compared to the pre exposure scores. The gain in knowledge of experiment group was 64.37 per cent as against 0.31 per cent of the control group. The actual gain in knowledge in the experimental group was 64 per cent. When the paired t- test was used, it was found that the difference between the pre and post exposure knowledge level of experimental group was significant ('t' cal was 36.21). **Bishnoi and Ahmed (2006)** found that there was significant difference in the pre and post test score of overall knowledge of the respondents as calculated value 't' was highly significant. Women had poor initial knowledge level about importance of family welfare as indicated by low scores in pretest. Maximum gain was found in the component prevention from communicable disease (36.99 per cent) and child care (34.83 per cent) in rest of the components gain was less than 30 per cent. There was significant gain in overall and component wise knowledge of the respondents. **Srivastava (2006)** carried on a project on hill women of *Kumaon* region for promoting utilization of small millets among hill women. Under this project audio visual kit for imparting hill women was developed. It consisted of a set of chart, posters, recipe booklet and video cassette was developed. There was a considerable gain in knowledge among women on different nutritional aspects. **Bist and Raghuvanshi (2007)** reported that gain in knowledge in terms of knowledge scores of experimental groups was found to be 47 per cent through comic book and 34.13 per cent through audio cassette. Thus, comic book



and audio cassette both can bring about significant changes in nutrition related knowledge of children and can be used as effective media for imparting nutrition education to similar population groups. **Singh and Yadav (2007)** concluded that media combination face to Face Interaction (FFI) + Slide (S) + Method Demonstration (MT) had maximum impact (69.1, 69.51 and 78.66 per cent) in Urea treatment for improving the quality of dry fodder, budding on local *ber* root stocks and gum production from a *senegal* respectively. It is suggested that skill teaching communication method demonstration alone or in combination with other media was most effective in skill perfection and dissemination of technology among farm youth. **Woodall et. al. (2007)** reported that messages sent by email appeared to promote a modest short-lived increase in use of a disease prevention website by some adults. Those who responded to the messages by logging on to the website may have been influenced to improve their diet. **Verma (2007)** reported that there was significant gain in knowledge after exposure on developed Video programme. The initial knowledge of the respondents was poor (22.71 per cent). Significant improvement in the knowledge of the respondents was found as a result of exposure to video programme as the pre test score increased from 22.71 to 61.96 per cent with the gain in knowledge of about 39.25 per cent. **Kharde (2008)** observed that among the various electronic and print media and their combinations used, the combination of video cassette plus folder was found to be more effective method followed by audio cassette plus folder in terms of gain and retention of knowledge by farm women. Thus, the study focused on the proper selection and combination of media in communicating message. Hence, the extension workers should use printed material with visual and audio aids; so, maximum emphasis should be given on the use of printed material along with audio and audio visual media for imparting knowledge to literate farm women. He further reported that there was a significant difference in the mean knowledge score before treatment and immediately after in all selected extension teaching methods that is audio cassette, folder, video cassette, audiocassette plus folder and video cassette plus folder. **Singh (2008)** used communication techniques consisting of lecture cum discussion method, T.V. film (slide story) and cooking demonstration on few low cost nutrition recipes. There is considerable improvement on the knowledge of mothers about increased diet during pregnancy that is 38 per cent (pre) to 60 per cent (post). Again there is significant improvement in Breast feeding (colostrums feeding) practice from 0.3 per cent (pre) to 100 per cent (post). **Snyder et. al. (2009)** organized five Day Campaign as components of heart disease, obesity or diabetes prevention efforts. The purpose of this research was to review the effectiveness of nutrition campaigns that use the media to change nutrition behaviour. The interventions/campaigns included in the study utilized a wide range of channels to deliver their messages including television, radio, workplace e-mail, CD-ROM and newspaper. Studies were also categorized by the population targeted, age of participants, gender of participants, location of intervention, tailoring of intervention, theoretical underpinnings and length of campaign. The results indicate a small positive effect on behaviour, similar to effect sizes found in media campaigns on other health topics (Snyder 2001). Thus, nutritional campaigns using the media contribute positively to advancing public health. The findings should help practitioners to design more effective and efficient nutrition campaigns and interventions.

Conclusion

Thus, on the basis of reviews we can say that nutritional education play an important role in empowerment of rural women.

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