

Information Need of Housewives: A Study on Matihar Thana, Rajshahi.

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Abstract

A good number of studies have been carried out throughout the world on the information need and seeking behavior of different professionals like farmers, lawyers, journalists, doctors, teachers etc. and a particular group of people like patients, students, women etc. and particular community like urban peoples, rural peoples, slam dwellers etc. but there have been few studies on information needs of housewives. The present study has focused on the information needs of housewives currently residing on Matihar thana, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. To figure out the information need pattern, 200 housewives were provided a structured questionnaire while 150 out of the total number returned the filled-up questionnaire with a rate of 75%. It has been found that majority percent respondents (82%) felt for information regularly. Child health and health of their family are getting prime importance (75%) in the case of their need priority. In order to get educational information, 80.67% respondents depend upon books. The present study gives bird's eye view on information needs of housewives for a particular thana and doesn't give the complete picture on information need attitudes throughout the country.

Introduction

Information need is a term closely related to the concept of Information Seeking Behavior (Islam, 2010). As a process, information seeking has to be placed into the context of why the individual requires information, how the information is to be acquired, and the availability and accessibility of the information itself (Patridge, 1991:40). According to Mchombu (1994), information need is linked to a specific situations and a need arises when the present level of knowledge is incapable of dealing with a new situation.

Like many other professions and the various cross-section of people in our society as for example students, teachers, researchers, specialists, business entrepreneurs, industrialists, service holders etc. housewives also require information relating to their day-to-day works, daily life, and livelihood. However, the need for information of housewives may vary from country to country, urban to rural and among different ages and literacy groups. Anyway,

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the basic need of information for all housewives is more or less same i.e. wide section of information in carrying out their day-to-day activities of a family. Most of the cases, the success of a family depends more on the well-informed and well-educated housewife. Housewives often need information on how to educate children, assist other family members, get a self-learning on balanced food, nutrition, child health etc. to govern a family in more cost-effective and more time befitting way.

Literature Review

If we consider family as an institution, then obviously housewife is a part of it. To maintain a family in a sustainable manner housewife often needs for information. This type of approach to information helps her as a member of the family in making the decision, caring children, cooperating husband and other family members. A good number of works have already been done on information needs and seeking behavior of different cluster of people, profession and country as for example, information needs and seeking behavior of rural women (Hossain and Islam, 2012; Bakar, 2011; Nwagha, 1992), women artisans (Yousuf, 2012), students (Ossai-onah, 2013), faculty members (Bhatti, 2009), nurses (Baro and Ebhomeya, 2013), family doctors (Bryant, 2004), health professionals (Anduale, Kebede and Kumie, 2013), research scholars (Kumar, 2013), farmers (Bachhav, 2012) etc.

Comparatively very few works have been done on information needs of housewives. Though there are several works on housewives relating to different topics such as their health issues, food preparation, marketing system, childcare etc, but not a single work has been found on their information needs and seeking approach.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present research are to explore:

- Necessities and purposes of information need of housewives;
- Types of and frequencies in using information need;
- Sources of obtaining information;
- More reliable sources of information need for housewives;
- Level of satisfaction and problems faced in getting information for housewives currently residing in Bangladesh.

Methodology

The study has been conducted a survey on information needs of housewives. All the housewives both in the urban and rural areas of Bangladesh are regarded

as population for this study. From the population, only 150 housewives from Matihar thana in Rajshahi district is treated as sample. A sample of the study has been selected purposively. The core data for this study has been collected mainly through survey method. The survey was conducted with a structured questionnaire; both open and closed-ended questions are included in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed as simple as possible because the target group of respondents had little or in some cases primary educational background. Researchers read out the questions with answers and helped in filling-up the questionnaire for those who were illiterate. It was not chosen to conduct an interview with the respondents due to following factors:

- Coyness of the housewives of Bangladesh which is also a typical sign of eastern tradition;
- Inertia to take part in any discussion;
- Depends upon mostly on husband's permission;
- Fear to expose personal matter;
- Religious bindings etc.

The theoretical framework for this study has also been constructed by reviewing necessary secondary documents, such as books, journal articles, web materials, etc. All the gathered data have been analyzed by using the modern statistical method and presented in the tabular, graphical and theoretical form.

Theoretical Framework

Housewife: A married woman whose main business is to carry out her family and manage household affairs and do only house oriented work.

Information Need: A gap between present-day situation of an individual or community and future requirements to fulfill the demand for information.

Signature literate: A person who doesn't know how to read and write any language but sign his/her name only.

Illiterate: A person who doesn't know how to read and write any language or even doesn't know how to sign his/her name.

No school background: The persons who have some sorts of knowledge on reading and writing but didn't go to any kind of school for purpose of getting the institutional education.

Demographic Information and Ratio of Women in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. According to Census-2011, it is found that on an average 1015 inhabitants have

been residing per square kilometer. The enumerated population as on 15 March 2011 was 14,97,72,364 out of which 7,49,80,386 males and 7,47,91,978 females, which yields a sex ratio of 100.3 indicating equal numbers of men and women in Bangladesh. In Rajshahi district among sixty-four districts of Bangladesh, the total population was 25,95,197 comprising 13,09,890 male and 12,85,307 female, which yields a sex ratio of 102 (Population & Housing Census, 2011).

Women Status in Matihar Thana

Matihar thana is situated in Rajshahi metropolitan area covering 20.55 sq. km of area. It was established in 1992 taking parts from Boalia thana, Paba, and charghat upazilas. About 40% area of this thana belongs to the urban area and rest to the rural area (Banglapedia, 2015). Its total population is 62, 172 out of which 33,446 male and 28,726 female. The Overall literacy rate of this thana is 69.3% in which literacy rate is 73.6% for male and 64.2% for female. A bird's eye view of demographic information of Matihar thana is enumerated in Table 1.

Table 1: Matihar thana: At a glance (Population & Housing Census 2011)

Area in sq. km.	Household	Population			Sex Ratio	Literacy percentage rate		
		Total	Male	Female		Total	Male	Female
20.55	12, 374	62, 172	33,446	28,726	116	69.3	73.6	64.2

Results and Major Findings

Distribution of Questionnaire

The data relevant to the study has been obtained through a mixed method of questionnaires. 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the housewives currently residing in Matihar thana of Rajshahi metropolitan area. Out of 200 respondents, 150 housewives sent back the filled up questionnaire with a response rate of 75%.

Table 2: Distribution of Questionnaire

Distribution of Questionnaire	Number & percentage of respondents
Questionnaire distributed	200 (100%)
Response obtained	150 (75%)

Distribution of Respondents by Age and Education

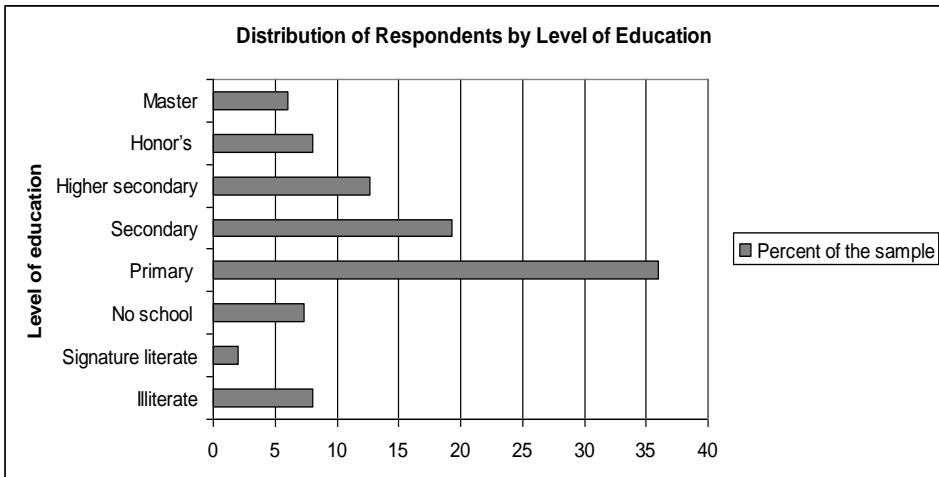
The Table 3 shows the highest number of respondent belongs to the age range of 20-25 (76; 50.66%) followed by those in the range of 26-30 (27; 18%).

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age (n=150)

Age Range	Number & percentage of respondents
<14	11 (7.33%)
15-19	16 (10.66%)
20 - 25	76 (50.66%)
26-30	27 (18%)
30 and above	20 (13.33%)

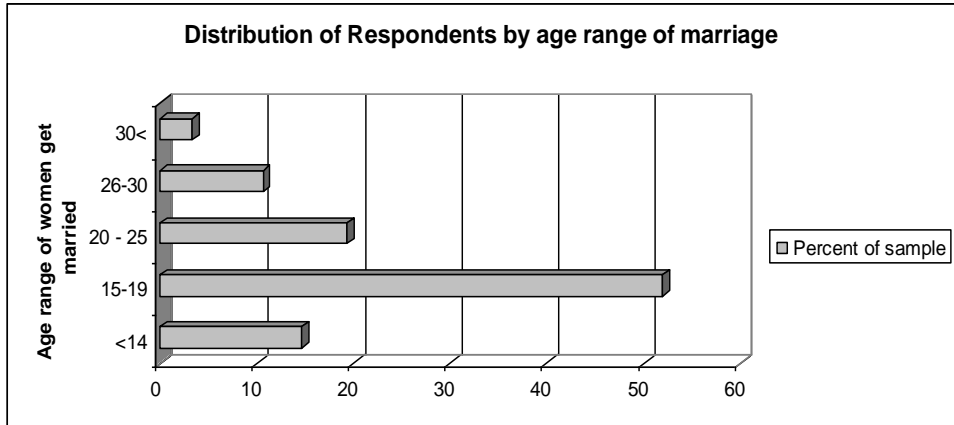
The Figure 1 depicts that there are 5 prevailing levels of education along with three groups who are illiterate, signature literate and also have no school background. The largest percentages of the respondents have minimum primary level education qualification (54; 36%) which is followed by those who have the secondary level of education (29; 19.33%). A significant number of respondents also completed higher secondary level of education (19; 12.67%) where 6% of the total respondents under being surveyed have masters’ degree. A mentionable number of the respondents (8%) did not get the institutional education from any institution but have knowledge on reading and writing belongs to no school background category. There are also 8% in the sample who have honor’s level of education. On contrary, the similar numbers of people (8%) have declared him/her as illiterate. Only 2% of the total respondents can sign their name only.

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education



Distribution of Respondents by Age Range of Marriage

Figure 2: Respondents by age range of getting married



More than half of the total respondents (78; 52.0%) got married when their ages were just 15-19 years. Though the Government of Bangladesh has declared 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage for women, however, more than 14.67% of total respondents under survey claimed that they have started their conjugal life before the age of 14.

Necessity of Information

Table 4: The necessity of information (n = 150)

Necessity of information	Number & percentage of respondents
Yes	150 (100%)
No	0
Total	150

All the housewives of above table expressed that they need information in the day to day activities of their family life.

Purposes of Information Need (Multiple Responses)

It was found that the largest group of the respondents (75; 50%) seeks information for child health and the health of their family in general, which is followed by the purpose of planning and directing the family and by the purpose

of cooking (36.67%). The lowest number of respondents i.e. 8.67% search information for the purpose of seeking business and political oriented affairs.

Table 5: Purposes of information need (n=150)

Purposes of information need	Number & percentage of respondents
For educational purpose	25 (16.67%)
For family planning and directing the family	55 (36.67%)
For cooking	46 (30.67%)
For child health and health of the family	75 (50%)
For food and family nutrition	37 (24.67%)
For recreational purpose	20 (13.33%)
Others (business, political, etc.)	13 (8.67%)

Types of Information Need on Daily Basis

Respondents were asked to point out the type of information they need on daily basis. The result is shown in Table 6, arranged in descending order of percentage size.

Table 6: Types of Information Need (n=150)

Types of information need	Number & percentage of respondents
Information on daily necessities	99 (66%)
Family planning information	87 (58%)
Health Care information	81 (54%)
Food and nutritional information	65 (43.33%)
Daily National News	25 (16.67%)
Educational information	13 (8.67%)

More than 50% of the total respondents identified three types of information that are needed daily viz., information on daily necessities (99; 66.0%), health care information (81; 54.0%), and family planning information (87; 58.0%). Educational information (13; 8.67%) and daily national news (25; 16.67%) are the two types of information relatively least commonly needed by the respondents.

Frequency in Using Information

It is clear from above table the most of the respondents are habituated in using information daily. Even then for more confirmation, they were asked to point out the frequency in using information. They were given three options in which they are requested to expose their opinions.

Table 7: Frequency of using information

Frequency in using information	Number & percentage of respondents
Regularly	123 (82%)
Suddenly	12 (8%)
Rarely	15 (5%)

Without any exception, the highest number of respondents (123; 82%) uses information regularly.

Sources of Information (Multiple Responses)

Housewives, in general, depend on several sources of information to meet up their day to day information need. The sources from which the housewives acquire information are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Sources of information

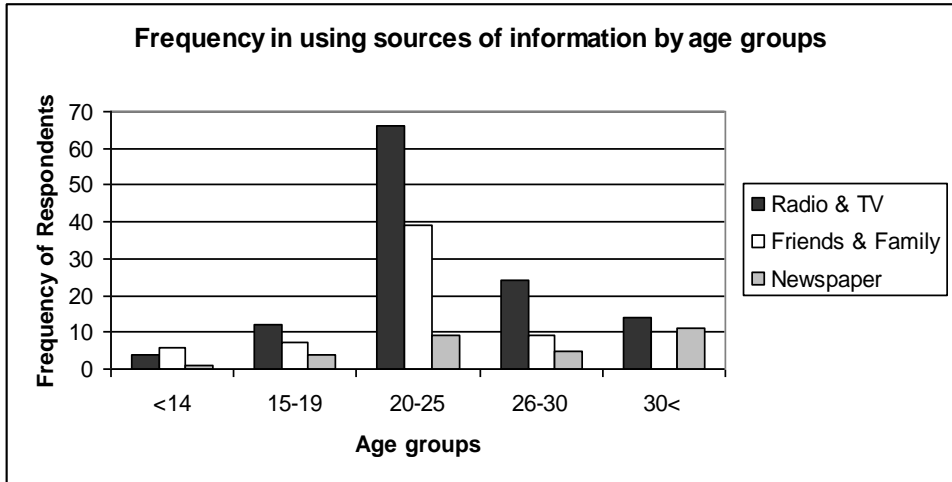
Sources of information	Number & percentage of respondents
Radio and Television	120 (80%)
Friends and Family	71 (47.33%)
Newspaper	30 (20%)
Library	9 (6%)
Book	6 (4%)
Internet	3 (2%)

The majority of the respondents under survey get information through radio and television (120; 80%) as a popular source of information, which is followed by those who depend upon friends and family (71; 47.33%). Newspaper (20%), library (6%) and books (4%) are the other three sources of information the respondents being consulted to fulfill their information need. A low percentage of the total respondents meet up their information need by browsing the Internet (2%).

Sources of Information by Age Groups

The three most popular sources of information i.e. radio and TV, friends and family and newspaper broken down by different age groups is depicted in Figure 3.

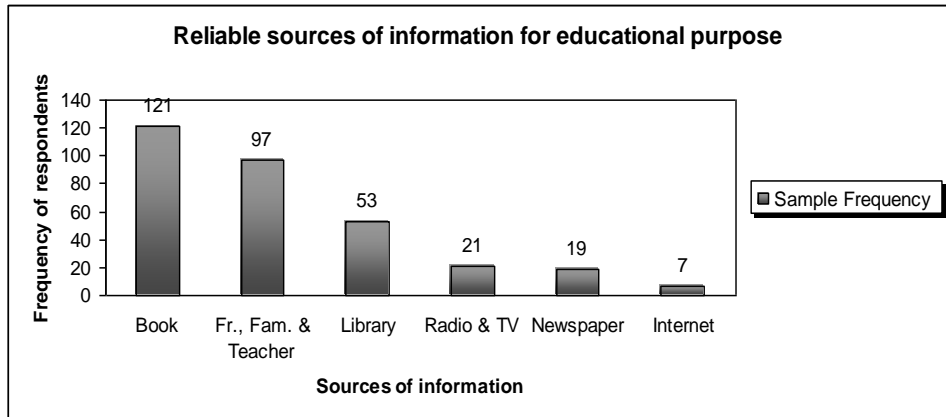
Figure 3: Sources of information by age groups



Reliable Sources for Educational Information (Multiple Responses)

For educational purposes, the respondents were asked to indicate most reliable sources of information. They were given 6 options viz., newspaper, book, library, Internet, radio & television, and friends-family and teacher.

Figure 4: Reliable sources of information for educational purposes



The percentage rate of reliable sources of information for educational purposes as mentioned by the respondents is shown in the above figure, listed in descending order in terms of size. Book (80.67%), friends, family and teacher (64.67%) and library (35.33%) are the three largest proportions of sources of information in which the majority of the housewives under survey rely on most in pursuing educational information. The radio and television, newspaper, and Internet (14%, 12.67%, and 4.67%) comprise of the lowest reliable sources of information for the educational purpose.

Level of Satisfaction in Using Available Sources of Information to Fulfill Demand

The level of satisfaction on various sources of information mentioned by the housewives is measured on a scale from 1 to 5 gradually as follows: ‘fully satisfied’, ‘satisfied’, ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’, ‘dissatisfied’, ‘fully dissatisfied’.

Table 9: Level of satisfaction in using available sources of information

Level of satisfaction	Number & percentage of respondents
Fully satisfied	6 (4%)
Satisfied	39 (26%)
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	90 (60%)
dissatisfied	10 (6.67%)
Fully dissatisfied	5 (3.33%)

Most of the housewives (60%) in this region technically avoid this question by exposing their opinion as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied while 26% housewives under survey are satisfied in using available sources of information. Dissatisfaction rate with the available sources of information is about 7%.

Problems Faced in Getting Information

Time restriction (86%) to get reliable and pertinent information is the major shortcoming identified by the housewives of Matihar thana. 67.33% housewives believed that there is not enough opportunity for them in gathering significant information fit their need. It is also clear from the Table 10 that 51.33% housewives face lack of cooperative attitude from their friends and family and 36% mentioned insufficient sources of information in getting needed information.

Table 10: Problem faced in getting information

Problem faced in getting information	Number & percentage of respondents
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Time constraints	129 (86%)
Lack of opportunity	101 (67.33%)
Insufficient support from friends and family	77 (51.33%)
Insufficient sources of information	54 (36%)
Financial constraints	29 (19.33%)
Lack of advanced literature search skill	11 (7.33%)

Major Findings

The findings of the study are:

- Half of the total respondents under survey belong to the age group 20-25. A large number of respondents have completed primary level of education.
- Majority percent of respondents need information regularly. Actually, they need information of daily necessities on daily basis.
- Child health and the health of their family, in general, are the areas where the majority of the respondents seek for information. On the other hand, a large number of respondents also seek information regarding 'family planning and directing the family' and 'cooking'.
- Radio and television are the prime sources from where housewives get their desired information. A greater portion of the respondents relies on books as reliable sources of information for satisfying their education information need.
- In order to get pertinent information time constraint, lack of opportunity and insufficient support from friends and family are felt by the majority of the respondents.

Conclusion

Information is treated as a resource while it is used perfectly and timely. Information is essential anywhere and everywhere regardless of age and gender. Every human being either male or female feels the importance of information and forms information need in their daily life. This study was conducted on a small community of our society and proves that housewives need of information always for fulfilling their daily activities. This study also presents the types of information need for housewives, the techniques the housewives use for getting or fulfilling their information need and the sources they presently use to collect the needed information and the challenges they face to get their information.

Higher education ratio among housewives is not at satisfactory level. Housewives can be encouraged to take part in higher education by offering formal along with informal education system. For increasing their education oriented information need, the various education oriented program like education on family planning, health, and child care etc. can be arranged at the village level. Training and workshop on Internet usage can be arranged to teach the housewives where to find information, how to filter information etc. More specifically resource center with special emphasis on women should be established at every union.

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