Role And Impact of ICT In Women Empowerment: A Study Ruralwomen In Jammu District

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Abstract- *Women are considered the integral part of the economy. Therefore, women empowerment is one of the most important concepts. Empowerment of women can be brought about in a number of ways i.e. either through employment or entrepreneurship. Besides, there are different dimensions or the parameters in which women needs to be empowered. One of them is through ICT (Information and Communication technology). ICT is one of the most powerful weapons which can be used to revolutionize the world and to empower women. ICT is an umbrella which covers all the devices related to electronic and media such as: software, hardware, mobile, internet, etc. Thus, ICT acts as a medium to bring changes in different spheres, such as: political, social and all other aspects of women empowerment by enhancing their skills, knowledge related to the access and use of the technology. Also, it opens up straight window for the women to the outside world without any hindrances. ICT is considered as a precious resource for women particularly in developing countries where they lack access to knowledge and resources. It provides an enabling prospective to improve living standard of women by acting as an important implement in meeting women's basic requirements. Thus, we can say that the role of ICT for empowering women is eminent, but, this is not much realised, especially in the developing nations. In this paper, we will study about the role and impact of ICT on women empowerment on a basic ground. The study also, identifies accessibility of ICT to women and how it promotes empowerment of women. For the fulfilment of the said objectives, the responses of women from the rural areas of Jammu district were taken. Random sampling technique is used to select the sample for the study. The data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire. As an access to battle the difficulty in empowering women, support from the various government and the non-government organisations is required. Apart from this, women should have confidence in her. Also, they should make positive strategies for them to demand for getting them equipped with the latest information and communication technology.*

Keywords- Women empowerment, Information and communication technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are one of most important resource of the country as well as the integral part of the economy. They constitute a larger part of workforce as well; still they are employed in rural and unorganised sector. The basis reasons for this could be customs, bindings or their position in the society/ gender discrimination. Therefore, their empowerment is a most important concept. Women empowerment can be brought either through employment or entrepreneurship. Also, there are different dimensions or the parameters in which women needs to be empowered. One of the ways to empower them is through ICT, which is amongst the most powerful weapons which can be used to change the world and to empower women. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has come up as an efficient implement that helps in smooth functioning of the economic activity in different spheres, such as: political, legal, economic spheres and in developing human resources. ICT is an umbrella which covers all the devices related to electronic and media such as: software, hardware, mobile, internet, etc. ICT, certainly have brought about unparallel changes in the approach how people communicate with each other either informally or formally with other people who are at distance from them. With the arrival of ICT, accessing information, communication, entertainment, networking, etc has become possible for the common people.

But, again technology empowerment is a difficult job. Women do not have access to the information and communications system. Also, they do not come forward to contribute to society.

In the era of the liberalization, privatization and globalization there has been an unprecedented growth. Also, this has up to a great extent helpful in removing the barriers of state and national boundaries. Thereby, broadening the perspective for women to explore their potential and add to women empowerment.

These days, many women have cross the threshold and come ahead and entered into careers in this sector. Some of them have even marked their names in this field.

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF ICT TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Despite of the fact that there are numerous challenges to fairness in the ICT field, various authors have considered ICTs as equipment for social transformation and justness. Women has gained a lot by the information and communication technology, who earlier had a very little ownership and power over the use of technology. These days ICT has proven to be both an enabling as well as a contributing factor for women empowerment.

One of the most common example to understand the importance of ICT for women is the e- commerce initiative. Women artisans are now have a direct exposure to the global markets without any third party intervention, through e-commerce initiatives of technology. Thus, it is the most suitable and helpful strategy for women to have access over the technology and its usage.

In the developing countries, the female internet users are less as compared to their male counterpart. Therefore, to overcome the obstacles faced by women to access internet the Government has initiated the E-governance programmes for delivering government services and ensuring that it reaches to maximum women.

Nowadays, information technology has become one of our daily and basic needs. It offers an incredible advantage in terms of ease of communication, interaction, and effectiveness in information storage and retrieval.

The sphere of Knowledge Networking has helped women enormously and opened a wider area of continual possibilities for information exchange via different mediums of the information and communication technology, such as: emails, online, social networking, radio broadcast, etc.

II. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Today, women have shown their participation in various economic activities both in formal and informal sectors and few has emerged as entrepreneurs with their own labels. Still, the women in our country they are facing discrimination in almost every aspect of life such as social, economic, education, health, etc.

Nowadays, ICT has become a renowned sector. It has unlock the various perspective for everyone to opt for a career in this sector by creating new jobs in the field of information processing for banking, insurance, and other sectors. A number of jobs are created in the BPOs /KPOs/ Call centers.

Apart, from creating jobs, it has also helped to improve the status of women in the country.

Women today are at par with their male counterpart and are the equal beneficiaries to all the opportunities and advantages offered by technology. But still maximum of the opportunity are confined to males or the privileged class of society. The study wanted to know about infrastructure (social, economical, educational, etc) available to different segments of the women and social freedom and opportunities in rural areas to access the information and communication system. The study also urges for the government intervention for stopping the digital divide among men and women. Also, the study shows how empowerment for women can be brought about with the ICT usage.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the paper are:

1. To study the role and impact of ICT on women empowerment on basic grounds.
2. To examine the accessibility of ICT to women.
3. To find out how ICT promotes empowerment of women.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework- The study has been conducted in the select villages of the district Jammu from the state of Jammu and Kashmir. To know the availability and accessibility of the ICT in the rural areas and how it helps in women empowerment. For the purpose of this study, I had randomly selected few villages as per convenience and took women as respondents. The total sample size was 105. With a view to achieve the research objective, both primary and secondary data has been used.

Primary Data- The primary data was collected through the structured questionnaire filled by the respondents (rural women). The questionnaire includes all aspects of socio-economic background of the respondent, role and accessibility of ICT system to women.

Secondary Data- Besides primary data, the secondary data has been collected through various sources i.e. News letters, Journals, annual reports, research papers, internet and other reliable sources
Primary data is the main source of information related to the present study.

V. FINDINGS

To study the following objectives all the parameters are further sub-divided into factors:

To study the role and impact of ICT on basic grounds,

Four questions were asked

ICT helps in searching information in areas of interest, ICT helps us communicate online, ICT helps us in online bookings, Use of ICT has made life easier. The details of which are explained in the figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 respectively.
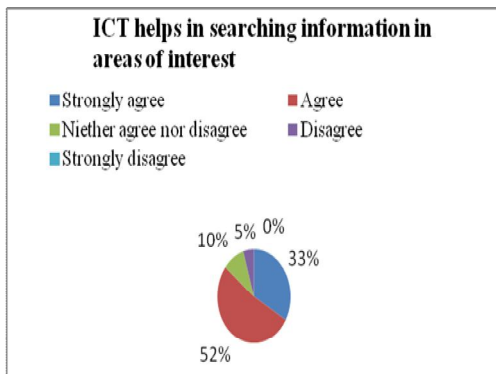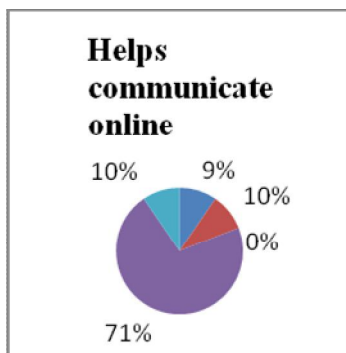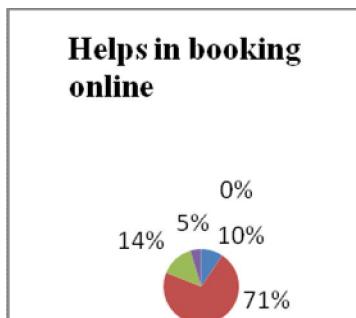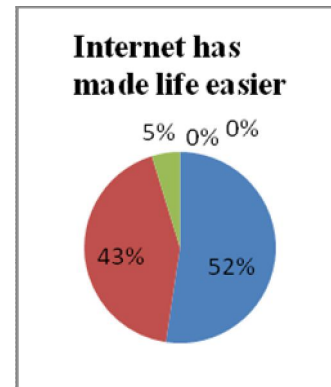

Figure 1.1

Figure 1. 2

Figure 1.3

Figure 1.4

It is clearly evident from the figure 1.1 above that 33% of the respondent strongly goes with the fact that ICT helps in searching information in the area of interest while 52% of the respondents agree with the fact that ICT helps in searching information in the area of interest. Only 5% disagree with the fact whereas 10% among them were neutral to this fact.

Figure 1.2, highlights that 29% of the respondents were of the opinion that ICT helps to communicate online while rest 71% of the respondents were of the opinion that ICT do not help to communicate online because of the fact that they do not have proper Knowledge of the technology and its uses.

In figure 1.3, 71% respondents agrees and 10% strongly agree with the fact the ICT helps in online booking and 14% gives neutral response whereas 5% disagrees with this fact. This is because they are not well versed with the use of technology and scared of using online services

Figure 1.4, shows that 52% of the respondents strongly agree and 43% agrees with the saying that ICT has made life easier because they feel that ICT application is being used in one way or the other making life easier.

To study the accessibility of ICT to women,

Four questions were asked:

ICT is the best way of getting information, Access to internet at work place, Women workforce are deprived of ICT infrastructure education/services,

Sufficient support by Government to provide ICT. The findings of which are shown in the figures 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 respectively.
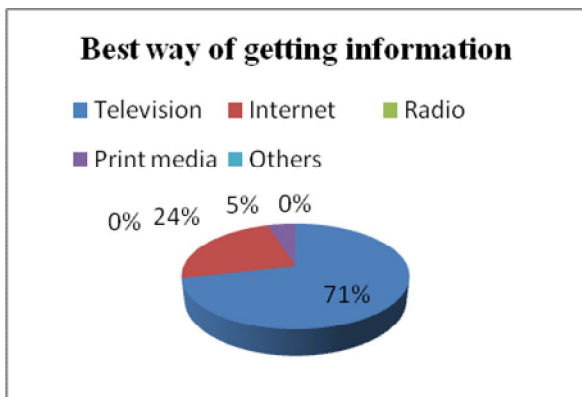
Figure 1.5

Figure 1.6

Figure 1.7

Figure 1.8

Proper facility of applications of ICT in the form of internet, electronic media, print media, etc. / Best way of getting information

Figure 1.5, shows that Television is the best way of getting information according to 71% of the respondents whereas internet constitutes only 24% and print media constitutes 5%. This is because maximum households have television at home and few might posses a mobile phone with internet connectivity. Thus best ways of getting information are television and internet. Also, 5% goes with the print media. The number is so less, this is because of literacy.
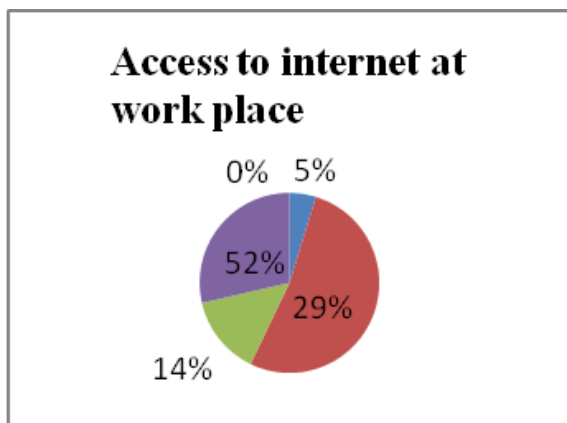
As shown in figure 1.6, 52% of the respondents disagree to the fact that they have access to internet facilities at their work place whereas 29% agree and 5% strongly agrees to the access of internet at work place.

In figure 1.7, Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that there is either no or very less Government support to make ICT services available to women.
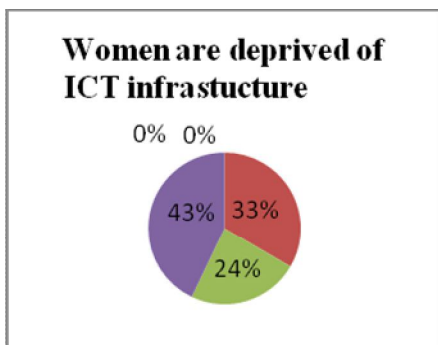
Figure 1.8, shows that 43% of the respondents disagree that women are deprived of ICT infrastructure because of the fact that knowing or unknowing every individual is using it but proper knowledge and awareness should be given as to how to use them.

To study how ICT promotes women empowerment,

Five questions were asked:

Working from home has made it easier to cope up dual roles of the women, Freedom in decision making, Opportunity to work from home and earn, making awareness about women's rights and laws and about happenings in and around the world, improved socio-economic position of women. The details are given in the figures 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12 and 1.13 respectively.
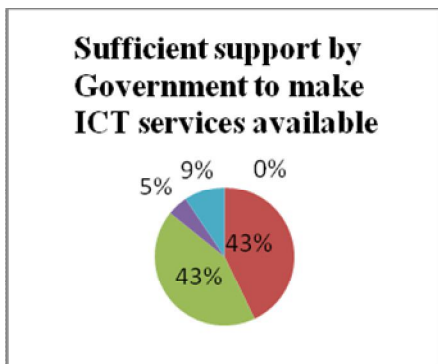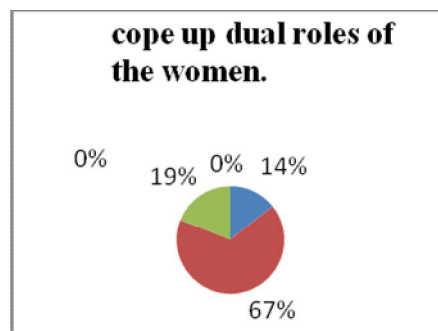

Figure 1.9

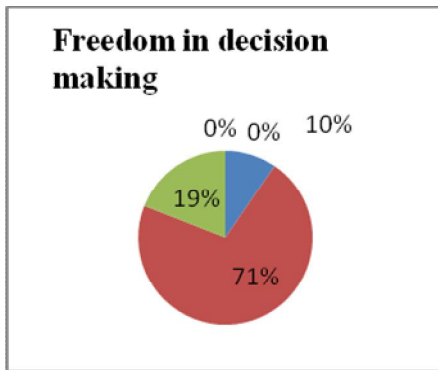## Freedom in decision making

Figure 1.10

Opportunities

Figure 1.11

Creates awareness

Figure 1.12

ICT has improved socio economic conditions of women
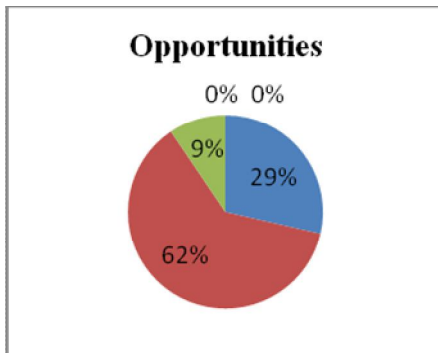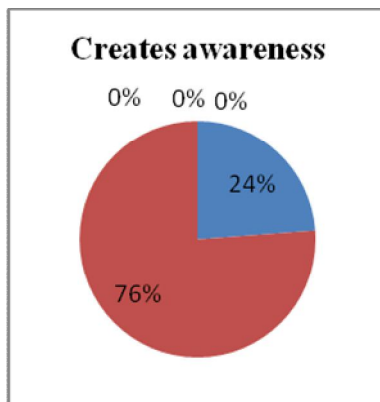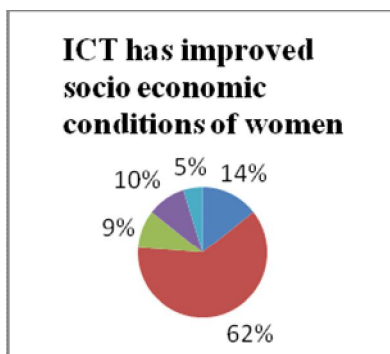

Figure 1.13

Figure 1.9, shows that 67% agrees that ICT has made it easier to cope up dual roles of the women because women

can now work from home and earn by using ICT whereas only few respondents are of the other opinion.

According to figure 1.10, majority of the respondents feels that with the advent of ICT women has gain knowledge about the happenings and are now more successful in taking correct decision.

From figure 1.11, it is clear that 29% and 62% of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that ICT has created opportunities for the unemployed women to work from home and earn their livelihood.

Figure 1.12, shows that 76% respondents agree to that fact that ICT has created awareness among the women about their rights and laws related to safeguard the interest of women. Also, they believe that ICT helps to know about happenings in and around the world.

Figure 1.13, shows that 72% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that ICT has improved socio economic conditions of women and raised their standards.

VI. RESULTS

After analysis certain findings were made, which suggest that:

- Though information and communication services are spreading rapidly still women are deprived of ICT in the rural areas.
- Numbers of cyber cafes or the internet centres are very less in the rural villages.
- Women do not have proper knowledge of the technology and its usage.
- The commonly used ICT form of service among the rural women is the television followed by internet (via mobile cellular communications).
- A mobile is usually personal device and it is possessed by at least 1 or 2 every individual in the family.
- Very few women uses newspaper/ to get information due to the prevalent illiteracy rate.
- The majority of women in the state do not have access to ICTs due to variety of barriers as such the infrastructural, social, cultural and linguistic.
- Sufficient support from the Government side in the area of technology is either missing or awareness about this is not their amongst the rural women or women are afraid of take the government innovations of ICT.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

As the rural women are constrained to their homes. Therefore, if we can get the technology to the women at their homes we will certainly be able to make a greater contribution towards empowerment. Some of the suggestions made as per my study are:

1. Government should make arrangement for the training programs for the rural women, to provide them the required skills.
2. Government initiatives with respect to women empowerment through ICT should be encouraged and properly facilitated.
3. Access to rights-based information, especially for women in rural areas should be made necessary.
4. Women should be made aware of the ICT in order to support women's social and economic empowerment and growth in every aspect of their lives.
5. Ensure proper implementation of the government implements.
6. ICT based Job Oriented vocational courses for women should be made free of cost or minimal fee should be charged.
7. Community access points such as telecentres can be a simple tool for conveying information to women that supports their social and political empowerment.

VIII. CONCLUSION

ICT is an huge umbrella which covers a larger struggle to build an information based society which helps in protecting women's right to communicate, own and use knowledge and refuse to accept restriction on freedom to use, share and modify informational content. Presently, access to the Internet by rural women is far less. in view of the fact that the objective of making more than half of the world's population have access to the Internet goes to the very essence of the information society. A nation cannot be said to have an information society if the majority of its citizens are not online.

Actual democratization of information depends on making ICTs accessible and relevant to every woman especially the rural women in the society.

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