

VIGILANCE, ACCESS AND USAGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT'S) AMONG SRI LANKA FEMALE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AND FEMALE RESEARCHES IN AGRICULTURE

S. Pathiratne

Head of Special Projects, ESOFT Computer Studies (Pvt) Ltd, Samitha8@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Information and communications technology (ICT) has become a very consequential feature in the Sri Lankan agricultural sector in contemporary times. Albeit it is still an incipient concept, an incrementing number of professionals are appreciating its use for development work. Female postgraduate students and researchers are paramount stakeholders in the development of agriculture in Sri Lanka. This study examines vigilance, access and utilization of ICT among female postgraduate students and female researchers. Data was obtained from 106 female postgraduate students and 27 female researchers in Western and Northwestern provinces in Sri Lanka, with the avail of a questionnaire. Information accumulated showed that female postgraduate students and female researchers are cognizant of ICT; both categories of respondents knew how to access Internet on their own. Additionally, 55.7 and 70.4 per cent of female postgraduate students and female researchers respectively used ICT for between 3 to 5 times in a week.

Key words: Vigilance, access, utilization, ICT, female postgraduate students, female postgraduate students

1. INTRODUCTION

“ICT (information and communications technology - or technologies) is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning” states Margaret Rouse [1]. ICT in agricultural development and rural development is significant especially now that its use has witnessed an upsurge in almost all areas of rural life in developing countries where it has provided a medium to adequate access to agricultural information,

Over the years the consequentiality of females to the development of agriculture has been accentuated. They are major stakeholders in rural security endowment. But in the very conservative settings it is arduous for development accommodation distribution to spread these women. However, it is only when the female scientists are conscious of, have access to, and can utilize modern ICTs that they can efficaciously discharge their communication functions. This study therefore examines the caliber of vigilance, access and utilization of ICT

among female postgraduate students and female researchers.

These two categories of professionals are concerned with agricultural information that will eventually be utilized by germane clientele in the long run. The study additionally determined the types of ICTs needed by respondents for their work.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Procedure for Analysis

Two Provinces namely Western and Northwestern were arbitrarily culled for the study. Five organizations were utilized as sampling frame; Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), Universities, colleges of Agriculture, and research institutes. In all, 139 respondents were identified.

with the avail of senior academics, heads of units and a list of respondents engendered from where the sample was drawn and utilized for the study, but data was available for 133 respondents composed of female postgraduate students and 27 female researchers.

The instrument for data accumulation was a questionnaire which elicited information on

personal characteristics of respondents, vigilance, access and utilization of ICT and types of ICT needed. The data collection continued for 5 months from May to September. The Statistical Package for the Convivial Sciences was the computer software utilized for data analysis. The statistical implements utilized for the study include; frequencies, percentages and designates.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of Participants

Variables	Female Researchers	Female Extensionists
Marital Status (n = 106)		(n=27)
Single	28(26.4)	8(29.6)
Married	78 (73.6)	19(70.4)
Age		
29-34	15(14.2)	27(100.0)
35-40	62 (58.5)	-
41-47	29(27.4)	-
Working experience		
3-8	94(88.7)	27(100.00)
9-13	12(11.3)	-
Academic qualifications		
HND/BSC	-	11(40.7)
MSc	95(89.6)	16(57.3)
PhD	11(10.4)S	-
Category		
Educational	54(50.9)	10(37.0)
ADP	2.3(21.7)	11(41.0)
Research Institution	21(19.8)	3(11.0)
NGO's	8(7.5)	3(11.0)
Hours spent on ICT (weekly)		
0 - 4	59 (55.7)	8 (29.6)
5 - 8	47 (44.3)	19 (70.3)
ICT skill rating		
0-1	66(62.3)	-
2-3	40(37.7)	27(100.0)
Length of Exposure to ICT (years)		
2-5	73(68.9)	19(70.4)
6-9	16(15.1)	8(29.6)
9-11	17(16.0)	-
Distance of ICT facility from office (km)		
0 -11.5	20 (18.9)	11 (41.0)
12 - 23	86 (81.1)	16 (59.0)

3. RESULTS

About 84 percent of the female postgraduate students denoted that they are vigilant of ICT while 88.5 percent of female researchers designated that they were vigilant of ICT suggesting that a relatively higher percentage of female researchers are cognizant of ICT. Additionally, about 82 percent of the female postgraduate students denoted that they ken how to access Internet on their own while 74.1 percent of female researchers betokened that they ken how to access Internet on their own.

Whereas 71.7 percent of the female postgraduate students betokened that they do not have adequate access to ICT, 59.3 percent of the female researchers designated that they have adequate access. The findings which showed that female postgraduate students do not have adequate access to Information Technology is a clear denotement of the dearth of computer and computer cognate facilities in their work environment.

Table 2: Type of Information Technology Element Needed by Participants

World Wide Web
Electronic Mail
Electronic Spreadsheet
Word Processing
CD-ROM
Use of Projector
Use of Computer
Training on Web Design
Chatroom

The findings of the study disclosed that 60.4 percent and 59.3 out of a hundred of the female postgraduate students and female researchers respectively have no Personal Computers in their offices. Those who betokened that they have Personal Computers in their offices verbalized that they were not connected to the Internet.

When asked to betoken how frequent they used ICT in a week, 55.7 per cent and 70.4 per cent of female postgraduate students and female researchers correspondingly denoted 3 to 5 times a week. As expected female researchers recorded a higher percentage compared to female postgraduate students.

Result additionally revealed that female postgraduate students consumed an average of 3.5 hours on ICT, while female researchers consumed an average of 4.4 hours on ICT. The outcome discloses that female researchers spend

relatively higher number of hours on ICT compared to female postgraduate students.

The Z-test analysis showed that there is no paramount difference in the number of hours spent on utilizing ICT hebdomadally. The implicative insinuation of this finding is that female postgraduate students and female Researchers are not spending sufficient period on ICT. When compared to findings of Goode and Elliot [1] who found in their study that research personnel spent an average of six hours each\ week on ICT.

Results withal shows that female postgraduate students denoted the distance between their office and the ICT facility is an average of 13.99 km, while female researchers betokened an average of 12.74km. The Z-value of 0.452 shows that there is no consequential difference in the distance to ICT facility between office of female postgraduate students and female researchers.

4. CONCLUSION

The study investigated vigilance, access and utilization of ICT between female postgraduate students and female researchers. Female scientists are consequential stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The study identified that vigilance of ICT among female postgraduate students and female researchers is high and found that respondents ken how to access the Internet but reported inadequate access to ICT. Most subjects do not have computers in their offices and for those who designated that they have personal computers in their offices reported that they are not online. It was establish that mainstream of the respondents used ICT for between 3 and 5 times a week.

The study found that female postgraduate students spent an average of 3.5 hours on ICT weekly, while female researchers spent 4.4 hours weekly. There was no significant difference in the number of hours spent on ICT weekly between female postgraduate students and female researchers. The types of ICT needed by female postgraduate students and female researchers include World Wide Web, E-mail, Electronic spreadsheet word processing, Optical Media. Use of projector, usage of computer, exercise on web design and chatrooms.

Since a dearth of computers in offices of female postgraduate students and female researchers was\ identified, the desideratum to equip offices with personal computers and link them up with

the Internet is very paramount. The utilization ICT Implements should be given solemn consideration in ICT applications among respondents. It is disappointing that many postgraduate students and researchers find it arduous to utilize these implements.

5. REFERENCES

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