

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Information communication behaviour among the members of livestock-based self help groups of Nadia district of West Bengal, India

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Communication provides a continuous learning situation in which members of Self Help Group (SHG) can develop better understanding for application of new knowledge and innovation of scientific technology in fullest way. A comprehensive study on information communication Behaviour among the members of livestock-based SHG was conducted in the Nadia district of West Bengal, India. A total of 60 randomly selected members from 6 livestock-based SHGs were covered. Only two enterprises, goat rearing and piggery, were adopted by the studied groups as their economic venture. Among the informal and formal sources, different mass media like television, radio and exhibition were most frequently used information sources but the sources like bank, Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) personnel and newspaper were the least cited information sources. Information sources like member of the other groups, radio, neighbour, exhibition and programme official were most extracted information sources by the SHG members. Members of the SHG perceived that training, local leaders, neighbour and newspaper, were found to have supplied more useful information. They generally preserved the information in their memory. Discussion with family members followed by NGO personnel/facilitator was the most important method of evaluation of information used by Self Help Group members. They also disseminated the information to their family members and fellow group members. After consumption of information, the SHG members gave feedback to the different agencies. Characteristics of SHG members like mass media exposure, economic motivation and innovation proneness had positive and significant influences on information communication behaviour.

**Key words:** Information communication behaviour, information seeking behaviour, information processing behaviour, information sharing behaviour, self help group.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of group activity is not new in this world and especially in rural India. Historically, there have been groups in our villages, functioning around a particular activity for welfare of their members. In India, these mutual help based groups are known as Self Help Groups (SHGs). The concept of Self Help Groups gained significance, especially after 1976 when Prof. Mohammed Yunus of Bangladesh began experimenting with micro-credit

and women SHGs. The strategy made a quiet revolution in Bangladesh in poverty eradication 'by empowering the poor women'. Experience in many countries demonstrates that poor people make investment wisely and earn returns. In fact, experience shows that some of the successful 'group-based' participatory programmes have made significant improvement in the conditions of poor masses. Since a decade, SHG have gained momentum. These have entered into many walks of our life, that is, in credit system, self employment, creation of awareness about developmental activities and more so in farming sector (Sharma, 2001). So, one has look into SHG's sustainability, functional mechanism, savings analysis,

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linkages with other agencies, effectiveness/impact on individual, group and community, constraints in group activities, commonness among the profile characteristics of the both SHG and its members.

If we really wish to sustain the Self Help Group approach, a necessary arrangement of the communication must be done as communication plays a vital role in bringing desired changes in the society as well as for alteration of the members' existing know-how, knowledge of some ideas or changes in his overt behaviour. These changes basically involve the communication of new ideas which spread in the social system. Further, communication provides a continuous learning situation in which members of SHG can develop better understanding for application of new knowledge and innovation of scientific technology in fullest way. To accelerate this change process in a positive direction, a comprehensive study was designed to explore information communication behaviour of the SHG members.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was purposively conducted in the district of Nadia, West Bengal, India as the district is one of the most successful in terms of SHG movement. Out of four sub-divisions in the district, two sub-divisions namely *Ranaghat* and *Sadar Krishnanagar* were selected purposively as these two-subdivisions had the highest number of credit linked SHGs at the time of data collection. A complete list of credit linked SHGs of both sub-divisions with their economic venture was collected from District Rural Development Agency. It was found from the list that SHGs adopted different activities. Majority of the SHGs (93) adopted rice based activity as their economic venture followed by livestock based activity (34) in the both the sub-divisions. From each sub-division, three livestock based SHGs were selected randomly. So, total of six SHGs were covered under the study. From each group, ten members were selected randomly. Thus, total of sixty SHG members were interviewed in this study.

Information communication behaviour (ICB) was operationalized for the present study as the way in which the respondents used different sources of information (personal localite, personal cosmopolite and impersonal cosmopolite), retain gained information for future use after careful evaluation and exchange information with one another and give the feedback to the originating agency. In order to measure this variable, an "Information Communication Behaviour Index (ICBI)" was developed. For the present study, it was also conceptualized that Information Communication Behaviour is the combination of 'Information Seeking Behaviour', 'Information Processing Behaviour', and 'Information Sharing Behaviour'. These three were considered as components/dimensions of information communication behaviour. Information Seeking Behaviour was operationalized as the extent to which an individual makes use of the different information sources/channel for acquiring knowledge after skilfully extracting the information from that sources with due consideration to its usefulness. Information Processing Behaviour was defined as activities performed by self help group member for synthesis, evaluation, storage, remembering and recalling of the information. Information Sharing Behaviour referred to the degree of tendency of a self help group member to share exchange and disseminate information with his/her personal localite and give feedback to the originating agencies.

A total 41 items were screened out after an exhaustive literature

scan and consultation with the resource persons against all the components/dimensions of information communication behaviour. After screening out of the items against each dimension/component of ICBI, they were framed into a structured interview schedule. This interview schedule was tested among the 20 Self Help Group members of Haringhata block of Nadia district which was a non sampling area of this study. After testing, the schedule was reframed and applied in the actual sampling area of this study. It was pre-established that in Information Communication Behaviour, all the three components have equal and significant contribution. Without any components and/or by giving less importance to any component, the triangle ICB cannot be framed and/or fulfilled. So, in this study, equal weightage was given to the each component. Therefore, the value of ICB was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the indices of three components.

Data were collected personally, with the help of a pre-tested structured interview schedule, and collected data were subjected to descriptive (frequency, mean, percentage) and inferential (multiple regression, 't' test, 'F' test) statistics to draw meaningful conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A glimpse of the livestock-based self help groups in the locale of the study

The effectiveness of the group depends upon the composition of group members, maintenance of registers, saving and credit activities, formulation and maintenance of rules and regulation, procedure of sanctioning loan and cash handling, training programmes for members etc. Table 1 represents a glimpse of each of the studied SHGs.

Formation year indicates the groups' maturity over the years and successful running of the group and meeting the expectation of the members. It was found that all the groups completed 5 years since formation. Theoretically, it is said that each SHG must be comprised of 10 to 20 members. Here, all the groups follow the rules of group formation and mentioned the membership of each group. Number of members of each group varies from 11 to 13. Number of register maintained in the group indicates the volume of work being done. Recording of facts and figures is dependent upon the number of registers. As a rule of SHG formation, each group has to maintain 4 registers namely; (i) resolution book, (ii) cash book, (iii) savings ledger book, and (iv) loan ledger. Here in Nadia district, all the groups maintained all the four registers for their respective purpose. Generally, group leader with the help of group facilitator maintained all the registers. Presence of members in time in meeting provided opportunity to the members to participate fully in group transaction. This was an important criterion for grading of the group. Each group organized a weekly meeting at leader's home or any other pre-fixed places for discussing the general agenda, group activities and sanction and recovery of loan. In some special circumstances, group leaders called the special meeting for sanctioning loan to his/her members to mitigate the emergency need. In each group meeting, they maintained the resolution book with duly signed by the each

**Table 1.** A glimpse of livestock-based SHG of Nadia district of West Bengal.

Name of SHG	Formation year	Year of 2 <sup>nd</sup> grading	Total member	Attendance in meeting (%)	Monthly deposit by members	Associated bank	Amount of loan after 2 <sup>nd</sup> grading (1 USD = 50 INR) (Lakh)	Economic activities	Number of training under gone
Unnati Swarojkar Dal	2005	2007	11	85	30	State Bank of India	3.65	Goat rearing	5
Mahabharat Swarojkar Dal	2004	2007	11	85	30	State Bank of India	3.65	Goat rearing	4
Nibedita Swanirvar Dal	2002	2005	12	85	50	State Bank of India	1.60	Goat rearing	5
Barasat Pritilata Swanirvar Samiti	2004	2007	13	85	30	United Bank of India	2.18	Goat rearing	3
Jaiguru Swanirvar Dal (male)	2005	2006	11	90	50	United Bank of India	1.80	Piggery	3
Barasat Annadata Swanirvar Dal (male)	2004	2007	11	75	30	United Bank of India	1.80	piggery	5

members present on that meeting. Average attendance of each group in their weekly meeting and special meeting is presented in the same table and it was varied from the 75 to 90%. It was also found that average attendance of 6 groups was 84.17% during the data collection.

SHG is a thrift and credit centre managed by the members. There must be some rules and regulation regarding how often to save in group and how much to save. Monthly deposit per member created common funds in the group which was rotated among members for meeting credit needs of members. The amount of deposit and regularity of deposit had direct bearing on the common fund generation. It also inculcated the habit of saving among members. Monthly deposit per member of each group is shown in the Table 1; it was found that members of four groups deposited Rs. 30/- only per month while remaining two groups deposited Rs. 50/- only per month. The main purpose of poor people came together to form group to meet their credit needs. There were certain procedures of sanctioning loan to members. As most members of SHG were from poor literacy and lower socio-economic strata, there was a need for proper discussion of loan requests explaining the details of loan. In this context, it was seen that in all SHGs (100%) loan

request were discussed in the group, details were made known to all members and all members get to chance to borrow as per procedure. Generally, it was found that in each group all the members took equal amount and number of loan.

Passing of second grading indicated the steady thrift and credit activities and sanction of project loan to start a particular economic activity for the group members. Passing of second grading indicated that the group was credit linked. In this study, credit linked group were selected and each group pass the second grading within 1 to 3 years from the formation of the group. Amount of loan to the credit linked SHG mainly depends upon the project economics prepared by the line department. It varies group to group according to their economic activity and project proposal. Loan sanctioned to each group varied from rupees 1.60 to 3.65 lakh. Economic activity represented the group activity to utilize the loan sanctioned to the group. Group activity mainly depends upon the availability of raw material, marketing of products, training facility available, willingness of the members to participate in the group activity, help and assistance from the line department in project formulation etc. Each of the studied group adopted either goat rearing or piggery as their economic venture. Rules and regulations helped

in effective functioning of an institution. SHG formulated rules and regulation in due course of time for proper functioning. Existence of rules and regulation in pen and paper were not sufficient but it should be known to all, understood by all and obeyed by all. Here, in all the SHG, there was no certain written document of rules regulation, but every member of the group obeyed the decision of group meeting and followed the rules and regulation as notified by the block authority during the formation of the group. Training was an important component of group development. Number of training attended by the group members on various aspects of economic activity was an indicator of effective group functioning. Training helped in improving the knowledge and skills of members to handle group activities properly. The data depicted in Table 1 indicates that members of each group attended 3 to 5 trainings.

#### **Information communication behaviour of the SHG members**

Information Communication Behaviour has been studied as a combination of Information Seeking Behaviour, Information Processing Behaviour and

**Table 2.** Sources/channel of information used by the livestock-based SHG members with their extent of information drawn and usefulness. (n=60).

Sources of information	Used sources/channel of information		Extent of information drawn		Usefulness of information sources/channel	
	Total rank order score	Rank	Total rank order score	Rank	Total rank order score	Rank
<b>Informal sources</b>						
Member of the other groups	123	III (6)	138	I (1)	118	VII (11)
Family member	110	V (9)	122	IV (7)	122	IV (7)
Friend	105	VI (10)	118	V (9)	120	V (9)
Relative	115	IV (7)	114	VI (12)	126	III (6)
Neighbour	125	II (4)	130	II (3)	131	II (3)
Local Leader	128	I (3)	122	IV (7)	132	I (2)
NGO/Facilitator	104	VII (11)	123	III (6)	119	VI (10)
<b>Formal sources</b>						
Bank	100	VII (12)	117	VI (10)	115	VI (12)
Programme official	124	IV (5)	127	III (5)	127	III (5)
VLW	113	V (8)	119	IV (8)	121	IV (8)
Training	125	III (4)	118	V (9)	138	I (1)
Exhibition	129	II (2)	128	II (4)	127	III (5)
Radio	129	II (2)	134	I (2)	119	V (10)
TV	130	I (1)	127	III (5)	127	III (5)
Newspaper	105	VI (10)	116	VII(11)	128	II (4)

Values in parenthesis indicate the overall rank.

Information Sharing Behaviour and finally overall Information Communication Behaviour of the SHG members.

### Information seeking behavior of the SHG members

Use of information sources/channels which are essential for the reception of messages cannot be ruled out, if the system has to be effective. Therefore, an attempt has been made to evaluate various kinds of sources/channel in terms of its use; extent of information drawn from each sources/channel and usefulness of these information sources to the activity of SHG.

Information Seeking Behavior of Self Help Group members related to their SHG activities were assessed in three parts. These are as follows: (i) Sources / channel of information used by the Self Help Group members. (ii) Extent of information drawn from different sources / channel of information by the Self Help Group members. (iii) Usefulness of information as perceived by the Self Help Group members.

### Sources/channels of information used by SHG members

Table 2 indicates sources of information as used by SHG members. All the sources have been

broadly classified into two, viz., formal source and informal source. The same table clearly indicates that local leader, neighbour and members of the other groups were the most frequently used informal sources of information by the SHG members. The findings seem to be logical because of local leaders were directly contacted with the SHG members. Local leaders helped in SHG formation and conveyed the relevant important information like government policies, subsidy etc to the SHG member. As per as formal sources of information concerned, television, radio, exhibition and training were the other most quoted sources of information. Bank and newspaper were the least-cited source of Information among the members of SHG related

to their SHG activities. The findings seem to be logical because of the reason that television, radio and exhibition provide the wide coverage with rationality. SHG members received basic and critical information from training programme.

Among both informal and formal sources, different mass media like television, radio and exhibition were most frequently used information sources but the sources like bank, NGO personnel and newspaper were the least cited information sources. Similar results were also reported by Sawant et al. (1979), Nataraju and Channegowda (1997), Swarnkar and Agrawal (1999), Kadian and Kumar (2000a), Roy (2004) and Singh and Dalal (2006).

### ***Extent of information drawn from different sources / channel of information by the SHG members***

Table 2 depicts the data on extent of information drawn from various sources of information. SHG members extracted most of the information from informal sources like members of the other groups, neighbour and NGO personnel. As far as formal sources are concerned, SHG members extracted most of the information from the sources like radio, exhibition and programme officials.

Among all the sources of information, member of the other groups, radio, neighbour, exhibition and programme official were most extracted information sources by the SHG members. Least information was found to be drawn from the sources like relative, newspaper, bank and friend. So, it seems that respondents, major criteria for consulting a source was the extent of knowledge gained from them. Interaction with communication channels a prerequisite to reception of information or awareness cannot be ensured if they are out of public reach or use. Whereas Kadian and Kumar (2000a) reported that the maximum information was drawn from local leaders, progressive farmers, friends, veterinary officers, ADO/VLWs etc. sources regarding scientific dairy farming.

### ***Usefulness of information sources / channel as perceived by SHG members***

Table 2 depicts that among informal sources, local leader, neighbour, and relative were found to have supplied more useful information as perceived by SHG members. Whereas, information sources like training, newspaper, exhibition and programme official among formal sources of information were found to have supplied more useful information.

Among both informal sources and formal sources of information training, local leaders, neighbour and newspaper were found to have supplied more useful information as perceived by SHG members. These

findings are relevant because these informal and formal sources had got high intensity of influence in matters of understanding the messages and conviction leading to acceptance of useful information about group activities. Similar results have been reported by Sarkar (1981), Singh (1982), Prakash (1991) and Kadian (1998).

### **Information processing behaviour of the SHG members**

The information processing behaviour has been analysed in terms of: i) preservation of information, and ii) the method used for evaluation of information for the decision-making and ultimate use.

#### ***Preservation of information***

The data pertaining to preservation of information have been presented in Table 3. It is apparent from the same table that the SHG members preserved the information in their memory as reflected by the data having ranked 'first'. Kadian and Kumar (2002) also reported that dairy farmers of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh preserved the information in their memory. The preservation of the information in the form of printed media was ranked 'second'. It may be understood that SHG members having lower level of education can simply listen and the try to memorize. The preservation of the information in the form of maintaining of subject matter file was the third important way of preservation of information among the SHG members. The findings seem to be logical because of SHG had kept the registers for the SHG activities. This habit helped them to maintain subject matter file with the help of the facilitator.

#### ***Method of evaluation***

Method used for evaluation of information was also analyzed. Table 3 represents that discussion with family members followed by NGO personnel/facilitator were the most important method of evaluation of information used by Self Help Group members. Members also discussed among themselves to evaluate the information. They also waited for forthcoming training programme and during training programme they evaluate the information. The result seems to be logical that NGO/facilitator helped SHG formation and they had a regular contact with SHG members for all activities because members were from lower class of the society. So, members of SHG mainly evaluate the information through discussion with NGO personnel/facilitator. Kadian and Kumar (2002) also reported that dairy farmers of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh evaluated the information by discussing with friends, relatives and progressive farmers.

**Table 3.** Information processing behaviour of livestock-based SHG members.

Processing pattern	Frequency of respondents in different preference				n = 60	
	NR (0)	LT (1)	ST (2)	MT (3)	Total rank order score	Rank order
<b>Way of preservation of information</b>						
Cursory look	7	20	26	7	93	V
Memorize it	1	19	25	15	114	I
Note in diary	7	20	20	13	99	IV
Preserve literature and use when need	7	12	24	17	111	II
Maintain a subject matter file	4	20	22	14	106	III
Any other	7	19	31	3	90	VI
<b>Method of evaluation</b>						
Discussion with friends	0	19	35	6	107	V
Discussion with in group	1	15	28	16	119	III
Discussion with in family	0	19	16	25	126	I
Discussion with NGOs personnel/facilitator	1	13	26	20	125	II
Discussion with relatives	8	15	26	11	100	VII
Discussion with other group member	6	17	25	12	103	VI
Consultation with local institution	6	17	25	12	103	VI
Consider the availability of inputs and profitability of information	3	13	27	17	118	IV
Wait for training and evaluate during training	0	19	35	6	119	III

MT, Most of times; ST, sometimes; LT, less of times; NR, never.

### Information sharing behaviour of the SHG members

Information sharing behaviour of the SHG members has been analyzed in terms of: (i) Dissemination of information, (ii) consumption of information, and (iii) feedback of information.

#### Dissemination of information

It is apparent from Table 4 that most of the SHG members disseminated the information to their family members and fellow group members at first. They also disseminated the information to friends, other group members, neighbour and

relatives.

#### Consumption information

The same table depicts that 98.33% of SHG members consumed the information relating to the SHG activities.

#### Feedback of information

After consumption of information, the SHG members gave feedback also. It was found from the same table that the members of SHG gave feedback mostly to the training institute and NGO

personnel, then gave feedback to bank followed by programme official, respectively.

#### Contributory characteristics of the SHG members for their differential information communication behaviour

It was observed in Table 5 that the characteristics of SHG members like mass media exposure, economic motivation and innovation proneness had positive and significant influences on Information Communication Behaviour but age and monthly deposit had negative influence on the same. The similar results were also reported by Kadian and Kumar (2000b) and Nande et al.

**Table 4.** Information sharing behaviour of the livestock-based SHG members.

Output pattern	Frequency of respondents in different preference				n = 60	
	NR (0)	LT (1)	ST (2)	MT (3)	Total rank order score	Rank order
<b>A. Dissemination of information to</b>						
Group members	0	25	26	9	104	VI
Neighbour	0	9	39	12	123	IV
Relatives	2	16	21	21	121	V
Friends	0	7	39	14	127	II
Family member	0	12	23	25	133	I
Other group members/ local people	1	12	29	18	124	III
<b>B. Consumption of information</b>	1	16	30	13	115	98.33%
<b>C. Feedback to</b>						
NGOs/ facilitator	0	18	27	15	117	I
Programme official	0	23	31	6	103	III
Bank	0	18	31	11	113	II
Training institute	5	12	24	19	117	I

MT, Most of times; ST, sometimes; LT, less of times; NR, never

**Table 5.** Contributory characteristics of the SHG members for their differential information communication behaviour.

Variable	Regression coefficients (b) values	"t" value	"p" value
Age of the SHG member	-0.003	-2.180	0.035
Educational status of the SHG member	0.008	1.000	0.323
Family size	0.007	1.470	0.149
Number of training attended	-0.007	-0.530	0.597
Total training duration	-0.001	-0.420	0.677
Operational land holding	-0.006	-1.140	0.262
Monthly deposit	-0.002	-2.100	0.042
Extension contact	0.002	0.560	0.580
Mass media exposure	0.022	4.340	<0.0001
Cosmopolitaness-localiteness	0.002	0.690	0.494
Economic motivation	0.013	2.110	0.041
Innovation proneness	0.007	3.580	0.001
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.741			
F stat = 9.78			<0.0001

(2009).

The value of coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.741, which indicates that all selected characteristics, which fitted in the regression model, explained the variation up to extent of 74.1% of the Information Communication Behaviour of SHG members and remaining 25.9% due to other traits which were not included in the study. The F and significant influences on Information Communication Behaviour (9.78) for  $R^2$  was found to be highly significant at 1% level of significance and it proved the relevancy of the regression model.

## Conclusion

Findings of the study manifest the information communication behaviour of the members of the Self Help Groups of Nadia district of West Bengal. It is evident that SHG members used both formal and informal sources of information and/or communication. It was also found that members of the SHG generally preserved acquired information in their memory and used discussion with their family members for evaluation. They also disseminated the acquired and evaluated information to the fellow group members and gave feedback mainly to NGO personnel and training institute. Mass media exposure, economic motivation and innovation proneness had positive and significant influences on Information Communication Behaviour of SHG members. Thus, the planner, administrators, may give due consideration to these facts which would help in strengthening Information Communication Behaviour of the SHG members in future.

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