

Information Literacy: A Challenge and Need for the Rural Communities in Manipur, India

Lairenlakpam Shanta Meitei, National Institute of Technology Nagaland, Dimapur, India

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the need and importance of information literacy as an essential component in information society. The article highlights the role of information and information technology as well as the relationship between information and literacy. This article also studies the impact of ICT in rural areas and examines the awareness of the term like, information, information literacy, computer literacy etc. in the rural communities in Manipur, India. Further, it elaborates the need for information literacy and challenges faced by the rural communities in the global information environment.

KEYWORDS

Computer Literacy, Information Literacy, Information Technology, Information, Rural Community

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the key components of modern society which facilitates the rapid growth and development of a country. With globalization and liberalization of the world economy, people from every corner have got the opportunity to communicate among each other and made the concept of global village a reality. The explosive growth in networked connectivity and rapid advances in computing power the technology like ICTs appear variously as the principal threat to the future of rural communities.

The present age is better known today as the 'Information Age.' We are in the midst of the 'Information Age.' During the last decade, rapid convergence of information and communication technologies prompted societies to rethink and redefine the word literacy. Now it does not merely mean the ability to read and write. Emerging words like computer literacy, information literacy and recently network literacy along with the ways societies make more utilization of information in varying decision-making areas, proved that a person who is not able to access, evaluate and use information for his potential needs is not a perfect literate.

Various terms related to information literacy have been used in the literature. Excluding 'literacy' itself, which is widely used in many connections, six terms (some of which have related terms which appear to be used synonymously) are found:

- information literacy
- computer literacy: synonyms- IT/ information technology/electronic/electronic information literacy
- library literacy
- media literacy
- network literacy: synonymous- internet literacy, hyper- literacy

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2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the information needs of the rural people
2. To study and examine the impact of ICT in the rural areas
3. To examine if the rural people have the awareness of information, information needs and information literacy etc. and if not, the problems faced by them
4. To study the need for 'Information Literacy' and availability of 'Information centres/IT centres' at village level
5. To examine the challenges faced by the rural communities to meet their needs as citizens of the 21st century

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a primary data of 1650 rural individuals of Manipur State. Sampling adopted for the proposed is so called Multistage Sampling. Pre-tested semi-structural questionnaire is used as a tool of the survey. Data is processed and analyzed through Minitab-software with well-known statistical formula like chi-square test and information is made accordingly.

3.1. Sampling: Multi-Stage Sampling

In the first stage, Stratified Random Sampling is adopted by classifying the entire rural area of Manipur state, the study population, into two strata viz., rural valley districts and rural hill districts. 60 villages, 15 from each valley district, from the first stratum have been selected while 50 villages, 10 from each hill district, from the second stratum. Simple Random Sampling is again used as the second stage sampling. By which 15 individuals have been selected from each selected villages for both valley and hill that comprises a sample of 1650 individuals. In the third stage the sample has been again classified into 10 different occupational levels (groups) with 165 individuals each. Again, for each category of occupation, 90 individuals from valley and 75 from hill have finally been chosen for data collection.

3.2. Survey Tool

Pre-tested semi-structural questionnaire.

3.3. Statistical Formula

Chi-square is used whenever found suitable and necessary.

Rural Community under the study have been categorized into ten groups by their occupation as cited below:

1. Farmers/Cultivators Community (hereafter, Group-A)
2. Businessman/Small Traders Community (hereafter, Group-B)
3. Housewife / Women Community (hereafter, Group-C)
4. Service Holders Community (hereafter, Group-D)
5. Laborers Community (hereafter, Group-E)
6. Social Workers Community (hereafter, Group-F)
7. Teachers Community (hereafter, Group-G)
8. Households Professionals Community (hereafter, Group-H)
9. Unemployed Youth Community (hereafter, Group-I)
10. Students Community (hereafter, Group-J).

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