



Information Sources and Awareness Level of Rural Communities on Food and Nutrition Security

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Introduction: Adequate nutrition is basic human need satisfying nutritional requirements on a regular basis, and is one of the most important pre-condition for an active, healthy and decent life. At the household level, food security refers to the ability of the household to secure, either from its own production or through purchases, adequate food for meeting the dietary needs of all members of the household. FAO recognizes that healthy, well-nourished people are both the outcome of successful social and economic development and constitute an essential input into the development process. Lack of awareness about the dietary requirements and nutritive value of different food is the main cause for prevailing malnutrition among school children, pregnant women, lactating mother and other vulnerable sections of the community. Nutrition education should be practical and should be easily adaptable to the socioeconomic status, food habits and the available local food resources generally needed for the purpose of demonstration and feeding of the locally available audience. In this backdrop the current study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To identify the various channels of information for food and nutrition security of the rural families
- To access their impacts on the food and nutrition security of the families.
- To identify the perception of rural families about information / services provided towards food and nutrition security.

Methodology: Rural areas of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts were selected for the present study. One woman and one man from twenty rural families in each district were selected for the study, making a total sample size of 80 respondents. Random sampling method was used for the selection of families. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data was collected using interview method. The secondary data was collected by reviewing the literature pertaining to the study. The collected data was statistically analyzed and interpreted using percentage analysis.

Result and discussion: Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. Poverty is the main cause of malnutrition and others, such as lack of education and information about good or adequate nutrition, failure to consume vitamin supplements or fortified foods, and the cost of food. Awareness about food and nutrition is very essential for maintaining the food and nutrition security of the family. Each member of the every family should be aware about food and nutrition security. Awareness level of men and women are different about food and nutrition and their sources of information are also different. The study was mainly focused on to identify awareness level and sources of information about

food and nutrition security in rural communities in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts.

Awareness about food and nutrition security: Majority of the respondents were not aware about food and nutrition security, though comparatively women had more awareness than men in both the district.

Awareness about basic five food groups: Majority of the respondents were aware about basic five food groups as they are used every day in the diet. The result also shows that in both the district, women respondents were more aware about basic five food groups than men. Being mostly involved in food preparation and other household activities related to food preparation, they were more aware about food and nutrition. In Thiruvananthapuram district, male respondents got information mainly from TV/radio (80 to 90 %), while female respondents got information mainly from books and newspaper (80 to 85 %). But in Kollam district, books and newspapers are the major sources of information among both category of respondents.

Awareness about fortified foods: Majority of the respondents were not aware about fortified foods. It clearly shows the accessibility of fortified food were very low among the respondents in both the districts. Majority of the respondents were not aware about the benefits of fortified foods and so they were not using fortified foods in their daily routine.

Use of iodized salt: Hundred per cent of the respondents in both the district were using iodized salt in their kitchen for cooking purpose. It showed that the people were more aware about the importance of iodized salt in their diet. Majority of the respondents got information about the benefits of iodine salt from TV/ radio.

Skipping of meals per day: Majority of the male respondents skipped their meals due to lack of time. They were very busy in the morning because of their jobs and so they skipped their breakfast due to lack of time. They skipped their meals due to lack of appetite and lack of interest also. But majority of the female respondents skipped their meals due to religious reasons. Because of their belief in traditions and norms, they avoided food for 'vratham' (fasting for religious reasons) for wellness of the family. They also skipped meals due to lack of enough food as they gave their share to other family members.

Awareness about bad effects of cooking oils: Majority of the respondents in both the district were aware about bad effects of high use of oil. The study results also indicated that female respondents were more aware compared to their male counterparts because women got knowledge about bad effects of high use of oil from many sources like magazines ('Vanitha'), and meetings related to nutrition conducted by Anganwadis.

Awareness about food safety: Female respondents were more aware compared to male respondents in both the district. Female respondents were the major consumers of programs on TV about food and nutrition, which was found to be the principle source of information. Personal experiences related to food preparation, food storage, etc. also were crucial in this aspect along with discussions with friends and family, Anganwadi workers, etc.

Awareness about food processing: Food processing is the transformation of cooked ingredients, by physical or chemical means into food, or of food into other forms. Pickling, pasteurization, canning and

freezing were the major food processing methods. All the respondents in both the district were aware about pickling method. Pickling was commonly used method of food processing at household level.

Awareness about bad effects of processed foods: Majority of the respondents were not aware about processed foods because use of processed foods are very limited among rural communities in both the district.

Preference of fast-food and their consumption: In both the district, majority of the male respondents preferred fast food once in a week while female respondents mostly preferred home cooked food. They aware about the bad effects of fast food.

Awareness about bad effects of fast-food: Majority of the respondents was aware about the bad effects of fast food but women were slightly more aware than male respondents. Women generally are more interested in food preparation and sometimes procurement of the family. They are also custodians of nutrition security of the family and try to get more awareness about food and nutrition of the family compared to men.

Awareness about sanitation and importance of clean water: All the respondents were aware about the proper sanitation and importance of clean water in both the district. Because the respondents got lots of information from books and newspaper and TV/radio. Health workers also went door to door informing about the importance of sanitation and clean water.

Awareness about nutrition related diseases: Majority of the respondents in both the district were aware about heart diseases, obesity, goiter, anemia, and hypertension. These diseases are very common in Kerala and so they got lot of information from various sources such as friends and relatives, TV, and radio. Marasmus, Kwashiorkor, Pellagra and Scurvy were not so common occurrence in Kerala and so, information about these diseases were low.

Awareness about programmes for nutrition security: Majority of the female respondents in both the district were more aware about the ICDS programme and mid-day meal programme as they got many benefits from ICDS programme. Women are very conscious about the nutrition security of the family and their children got midday meals through this programmes. National Health Mission (NHM) is an initiative undertaken by the Government of India to address the health needs of under-served rural areas. Majority of the female respondents in both district were more aware than male respondents because women got many services through this programme. NHM was mainly focused on the maternal health.

Awareness about agricultural education in school level: In both the districts, majority of the respondents are partially aware about agricultural education in school level. Information about this education was mainly coming through school going children as school going children shared their experiences in kitchen garden of school to parents.

Services received from various programmes: Nutrition and health education, midday meal programme and supplementary nutrition were the main services received by the female respondents through various programmes.

Awareness about nutritional related information: Awareness about nutrition related information like nutritional diseases, feeding of children, and prenatal and postnatal care of women are higher in

female respondents than male respondents. They got information about it from various sources, like friends and relatives, books and newspaper, etc.

Impact of information and services: Impacts of information and services were mainly seen among the female respondents because they use that information and services properly. Information about food and nutrition had to make impact in their knowledge level, consumption pattern, purchasing pattern, nutritional attitude, and cooking methods.

Recommendations: Major recommendations of the study based on the findings are as follows:

- Services of Integrated Child Development Service Scheme (ICDS) and other programmes needs to be provided on time
- Vulnerable sections of the communities like children and senior citizens should also be included in the services under various schemes
- Male members should also be included under the services like nutrition and health education
- Awareness sessions related to making and maintenance of kitchen garden should be addressed to both male and female members of the every family
- Awareness sessions about bad effects fast-food need to address all members of the rural

Complete report on 'Information Sources and Awareness Level of Rural Communities on Food and Nutrition Security' is available at www.manage.gov.in

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