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Information Use among Working Women in the Associated Cement Company (ACC) Wadi, Gulbarga: A Survey

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Introduction

The idea that women in India are best suited to being at home is gradually changing. With the changing economic environment, more and more Indian women who were confined to their household duties are taking up jobs in well-established offices and companies to ensure a definite income for them. There are others who have their own business and are engaged in other industrial activities, although the number of women in this category is comparatively low (Venkataraman, 1995, p.1).

Working women need constant updating of their knowledge to demonstrate their skills, abilities, leadership qualities, and job efficiency, as well as knowledge on their rights, responsibilities, and limitations. This can occur through continuous reading, adequate training, education, and effective library facilities to support these information needs. While the literacy rate of Karnataka state has increased to 64.04 percent since the year 2001, the male literacy rate is 76.29 percent while the female literacy rate remains at 57.45 percent, which is far below than state average (Vijayaraghavachar, S M. 2001, p.70)

Reading not only enriches the mind but sharpens the intellect of the reader. Reading is necessary for working women to develop their personality and to find solutions to problems they encounter not only on the job but also in their day to day life. A library is a service institution that can justify its existence only when it satisfies the information requirements of its users. User satisfaction is one of the basic objectives of the collection of any library. To systematically plan the organisation and development of library resources and services, as well as to assess the information needs of the users, user studies are becoming crucial and imperative. The present study, therefore, evaluates and assesses the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of working women.

Background of ACC Cements, Wadi

The Associated Cement Company (ACC) was set up in 1968 with an installed capacity of 4 Lakhs (400,000) per annum of ordinary Portland cement clinker. Subsequently the capacity was enhanced in two phases to 20 Lakh tonnes per annum. The current capacity after the commissioning of new plant is 40 Lakh tonnes per annum. The factory is situated in the south-central part of India in the state of Karnataka. It is well connected by railroad and highway. The nearest important railway junction, Wadi, is

on the central railway between Solapur and Guntakal. Wadi station is about 1.0 kilometer from the plant site. The plant machineries were originally supplied by M\S. Taylor and M\S. ABL and were later renovated and upgraded over ten years (Bhatt, 1998)

It is presently one of the largest cement units in India with net assets worth Rs. 2843 crores sales amounting to Rs. 2,921 crores (units of 10 million) and annual revenues of Rs 3,322 crores. Its annual cement production capacity is 15.5 million tons. The company's enterprises are supported by a powerful in-house research and technology facility, the only one of its kind in the Indian cement industry. This ensures not just consistency in product quality but also continuous improvements in products, processes, and applications.

Wadi Cement Works manufactures ordinary Portland cement Type 43'53 grade (latest version of IS; 8112 and IS; 12269 respectively) and Portland pozzolana cement (latest version of IS; 1489 PART –I) under the brand name ACC SURAKSHA which makes use of fly ash up to 25 percent, thereby helping in maintaining a pollution free environment. The existing colony of ACC, Wadi, is at a distance of about 1.2 km. Wadi is a main railway junction on the broad-gauge line connecting Wadi with Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bangalore.

Employment Profile of ACC Ltd. Wadi

ACC Cements, Wadi, directly and indirectly provides livelihood to 100,000 people. It employs about 1,600 people as permanent employees and about 500-800 as contract labour. In addition, there are people working as transporters, drivers, cooks, etc. There are a large number of businesses flourishing on account of ACC. These are as diverse as tailoring, pan shops, STD booths, etc.

Hypotheses

One of the positive hypotheses formulated in this study is that information needs and use behaviour of working women have a definite relationship with characteristics such as qualifications, subject specialization, and the amount of time available to each woman. Also, their domestic burdens, including the responsibility of nurturing children, might have a substantive influence in keeping the working women away from continuous reading.

Methodology and Sample

The target population of this study is the working women of ACC Ltd. Wadi. Since the target population includes rural as well urban dwellers, and all of them are literate, a questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The population surveyed included exclusively the working women of the Associated Cement Company Ltd. Wadi, Gulbarga District. The questionnaire was personally distributed to a group of selected working women covering different fields of specialization in the industry. A total of 125 questionnaires was distributed. One hundred responses were received, a response rate of 69.193 percent. The data was tabulated and analysed for results and discussion.

Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify information needs and use behaviour of the working women in an industrial organization;
2. To discover the amount of time spent in reading and acquiring information;

3. To identify the libraries and the source(s) of reading materials the working women depend upon;
4. To identify the information seeking behaviour of the working women;
5. To identify the major factors that prevent the working women from continuous reading, as well as the factors those influence their information use behaviour;
6. To identify the type and form of sources of information they are interested in; and
7. To suggest appropriate measures for improvement of the existing library facilities.

Scope and Limitation

The study is confined to the working women of Associated Cement Company Ltd. (ACC) Wadi, Gulbarga District, India. The following limitations are identified:

1. It investigates the information needs and use behaviour of the working women (limitation by respondent);
2. It covers the working women of the ACC Ltd. Wadi, Gulbarga District (by geography);
3. It considers only those working women having a minimum qualification of matriculation or above (by qualification);
4. It includes only those working women aged 20 or older (by age);
5. It covers both married and unmarried working women (by marital status);
6. It includes those working women who hold a post not lower than Class-III employees (by grade);

Women who are unemployed, housewives, paddy workers, holding Class-IV jobs, having below matriculation levels of education, and below 20 years of age are excluded from this study.

Sample Characteristics

The questionnaire was distributed among 125 working women of ACC Wadi, of which only 100 responded, a response rate of 69.93 percent. Among the respondents, 37 percent were 30-40 years old, followed by 30 percent from 40 to 50 years, with 22 percent aged 20-30. Only 5 percent of the respondents are aged 50-60, and about 6 percent did not indicate their age. Forty-six percent are postgraduates, 39 percent are graduates, and 12 percent are matriculates. Only 2 percent of respondents held the highest academic degree, i.e., PhD, and only 1 percent hold an MPhil degree. Seventy-six percent are married.

Results

The data from the questionnaires were classified and tabulated. The tabulated data depict the views of the respondents relating to their information and use behaviour. The chi square (X^2) test was used to determine the differences in frequency variations of responses and the significance of difference between two independent groups.

Types of Information Needed

Table 1 indicates the ranking order respondents by their information needs. The study shows that the majority rank information relating to childcare first, followed by home management. The results imply a significant difference in the opinion of respondents.

Time Spent on Reading and Searching for Information

Table 2 (a) indicates the average time spent in a week on reading or searching for information in the subject of their interest. It shows that 28 percent for 1-2 hours a week, while 11 percent read for less than an hour. About one-fifth read for more than 6 hours a week in their respective subject fields or specialisations. Table 2(b) indicates that 44 percent read for 1-2 hours in areas other than their field of subject interest.

Table 1: Ranked Order of the Information Needs of Respondents

Ranking	Vital Information Needs	Utmost Significant	Moderately Significant	Less Significant	Total
1	Child Care	47	14	10	71
2	Home Management	44	38	08	90
3	Govt. Politics, Plans relating to women	37	29	14	80
4	Cooking	28	47	18	93
5	Knitting/Weaving	15	35	40	90
6	Films	09	42	36	87
7	Politics	07	27	46	80
Total		187	232	172	591

$$X^2=136.393, p<0.05$$

Table 2(a): Time Spent in a Week on Reading / Searching for Information

Ranking Order	Time spent in week on subject of interests	No. of respondents	percent	Cumulative respondents	Cumulative Percentage
1	1-2hours	28	28	28	28
2	2-4 hours	24	26	54	54
3	4-6 hours	14	14	89	89
4	>6 hours	21	21	75	75
5	< 1 hour	11	11	100	100
Total		100	100		

Table 2(b): Time Spent in a Week on Reading / Searching for Information

Ranking Order	Time spent in week on other subject field	No. of respondents	percent	Cumulative respondents	Cumulative Percentage
1	1-2hours	44	44	44	44
2	2-4 hours	22	22	66	66
3	4-6 hours	07	07	100	100
4	>6 hours	12	12	93	93
5	< 1 hour	15	15	81	81
Total		100	100		

Forms of Documents Read

Table 3 shows that nearly all respondents ranked newspapers as a top or high priority.

Types of Documents Preferred

Three-fifths of respondents designated books as their top priority, with about half giving top priority to reference books, followed by current periodicals (about one-third).

Main Sources of Information

Books are the prime source of information for more than three-quarters of respondents (Table 5). On the other hand, about two-thirds acquire information by discussing with their colleagues/ friends; 58 percent stated that they frequently depend on newspapers; about half use media reports (television, radio). Two-thirds do not use commercial databases or information brokers at all to meet their information needs. This could be either due to the non-availability of commercial database and information brokers locally or lack of knowledge about this source.

Table 3: Forms of Documents Read by Respondents

Ranking Order	Types of Material Read	Top Priority	High Priority	Low Priority	No Responses
1	News Paper	45	46	09	
2	Research Reports	34	31	23	12
3	Popular magazines	33	58	09	
4	Science fiction	26	28	37	07
5	Text books	26	45	26	03
5	Short Stories	24	47	24	05
6	Journals	19	42	28	11
7	Humour	16	36	38	10
8	Novels	14	27	52	07
9	Dramas	10	25	57	08
10	Poems	10	32	52	06
11	Travel stories	09	36	49	05
12	Biographies	08	40	48	05

Table 4: Respondents Rating on Types of Documents Used

Ranking Order	Types of Document used	Top Priority	Middle Priority	Low Priority	Do Not use	No Responses
1	Books	60	28	10	02	
2	Reference Books	48	21	14	12	05
3	Current Periodicals	32	35	14	07	08
4	Newspaper clipping	14	35	28	13	10
5	Back runs of journals	08	27	33	32	
6	Reprints & Photocopies	03	14	32	32	19

Table 5: Sources of Information Used to Obtain Information

Ranking Order	Sources	Frequently used	Moderately used	Rarely used	Not Used
1	Books	77	15	08	
2	Discussions with colleagues/friends	66	26	07	01
3	Newspapers	58	30	12	-
4	Media reports (TV, Radio, ect.)	49	34	08	07
5	Periodical articles	36	46	11	07
6	Personal correspondence	18	32	33	17
6	Govt. Publications	14	25	26	35
7	Conference/Seminars/ Workshops proceedings	12	27	40	21
8	Research reports	12	17	23	48
9	Primary data (Collected through survey)	09	26	27	38
10	Indexes/Abstracts	07	18	27	48
11	Information intermediaries	03	12	21	64
12	Commercial databases/infor. Brokers.	-	15	18	67

Factors Which Prevent Respondents from Reading

Domestic responsibilities keep 25 percent of respondents from regular reading, while those responsibilities and children's education combined keep 23 percent from regular reading (Table 6). On the other hand, domestic plus work responsibilities, domestic and work responsibilities plus children's education; and only work responsibilities keep 12 percent in each category from regular reading. Only 2 percent of respondents do not read due to lack of personal interest. Interestingly, only 3 out of 100 working women reported having no problems at all keeping up their reading habits.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are formulated for developing the reading habits of working women.

1. Every sector of society, especially industry, should have a library to develop reading interest among working women.

2. A library should be established at a central place to exclusively accommodate a collection on and about women with membership facilities open to women.

3. Every institution/organization to which a library is attached, must earmark one hour as the library hour to encourage reading habits among the employees (working women).

4. The industrial and local library and other relevant agencies should conduct meetings on information requirements of working women at frequent intervals.

5. The municipal authorities should establish a library where a "reader's profile" (information needs and reading interests of working women) is recorded as guidance for procuring reading materials for working women.

6. The reading materials should reach the doorstep of every working woman through local public library bookmobile services once a week or at regular intervals, to cultivate a habit of reading among working women.

Table 6: Factors Which Prevented Respondents from Reading

Ranking Order	Factors that prevents reading	No. of respondents	%	Cumulative respondents	Cumulative Percentage
1	Domestic Responsibilities	25	25	25	25
2	Domestic Responsibilities & Children's Education	23	23	48	48
3	Domestic & Work Responsibilities	12	12	60	60
4	Domestic, Work Responsibilities & Children's education	12	12	72	72
5	Work Responsibilityess	12	12	84	84
6	Children's education	06	6	90	90
7	Other Problems	05	5	95	95
8	No Problems	03	3	98	98
9	No Personal Interests	02	2	100	100
Total		100	100		

Conclusion

Information is a vital resource to creating, maintaining, and developing a reading society. Reading is an art, and the art of reading is the art of living with books. Reading not only leads to writing, but also enriches the mind of a reader and sharpens the intellect. Libraries can help cultivate good reading habits among their readers. Working women with good reading habits can face any challenge in their lives and can successfully tackle any problems they encounter, at work or at home.

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