

Digital Health Information-Seeking Behaviors of Rural Women in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu

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The Indian government has introduced numerous healthcare initiatives to improve public health, yet rural communities continue to face significant challenges due to limited awareness and information access. This study investigates the digital health information-seeking behaviors of rural women in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu, with a focus on the role of digital tools in improving health awareness and decision-making. The primary objectives were to understand the purpose behind health information seeking, identify preferred formal and informal sources, explore barriers to access, and assess user satisfaction with information services. A survey was conducted using structured interviews and questionnaires across three blocks of Namakkal District: Namakkal, Rasipuram, and Tiruchengode. Out of the 320 questionnaires distributed, 219 were valid for analysis. Among the respondents, 144 were educated and 75 were uneducated. The block-wise distribution revealed that Rasipuram accounted for the highest proportion (46.58%) of participants, followed by Namakkal (26.94%) and Tiruchengode (25.58%). Educated women were found to be more engaged in seeking digital health information, particularly in Rasipuram (46.53%), while uneducated women largely relied on traditional sources such as local healthcare providers. The findings indicated that although digital platforms were underutilized, there was increasing interest among younger and more educated rural women. Barriers such as limited internet access, low digital literacy, and distrust in online sources were prevalent. However, a positive attitude toward adopting digital tools was observed among those familiar with technology. The study recommends the introduction of free digital literacy programs, better infrastructure in rural areas, and the development of trustworthy, government-endorsed health portals to improve access. This research highlights the potential for digital health solutions to bridge the rural information gap, provided targeted support and inclusive policy measures are implemented effectively.

Keywords: *Digital health; Health information-seeking; Rural women*