

Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions to Livelihood Improvement: A Household level Analysis in Coastal Belt of Bangladesh

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Abstract The study was conducted in the Sreerampur Union of Dumki Upazilla under Patuakhali district to find the awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement. Out of 1933 (each from one farm family) rural women of the village 108 (about 6 percent) were, selected as the sample for the study. Data were collected from the selected rural women through using a pre-tested structured personal interview. Descriptive statistical methods such as range, table, and rank were used to describe the variables of the study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient were used to test relationship between the concerned variables. From the findings it was revealed that among the respondents the highest 42.59 percent belongs to the medium awareness group followed by 29.63 percent belonging in high awareness group and 27.78 percent low awareness group. Education, training experience, communication exposure showed significant positive relationship with awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement. Age and Family size had significant negative relationships with the awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement. The rest of the variables, namely farm size, annual income, fatalism, and credit received women had no relationship with their awareness on development interventions for livelihood improvement.

Keywords: rural women, awareness, livelihood, development, Bangladesh

Cite This Article: Israt Jhahan, Irteja Hasan, and Saydur Rahman, "Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions to Livelihood Improvement: A Household level Analysis in Coastal Belt of Bangladesh." *Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2017): 33-40. doi: 10.12691/jsa-1-1-5.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a small South Asian country and has the highest population density in the world with 142,319 thousand people in a 147,000 square km area, where the average population density is about 964 inhabitants per square kilometer. In Bangladesh, 16.11% of the population depends - directly or indirectly - on agriculture for their livelihood, since it provides income and food [5]. In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, men hold the sovereign power to control households and society as a whole, and woman are frequently secluded in their homes [4,10]. Without effective participation of women in development activities, it is impossible to develop overall development of the country. But they have little or no access to people or positions of influences; for the most part they are illiterate. They are often deserted when husband cannot find income in the villages and move away to pursue work [12]. Women are ascribed as being of lower status compared to men, and poverty is higher among women than men [9,15].

In Bangladesh, about half of the total population is female and a majority of them, 80%, live in rural areas [11]

Poverty has engulfed rural women, and they face many challenges to achieve and maintain their livelihood [4]. They are vulnerable to income shocks and their systems of livelihood are often so fragile and finely-balanced that a small misfortune can destabilize the households for many years. Therefore, Bangladeshi rural women are considered as underprivileged and less developed. But women play significant and crucial role in the development of family and society [5] Women play an important role in agricultural production, animal husbandry and other activities like storage of marketing product, food processing etc. Besides they spend 10 to 12 hours per day doing household activities [6]

Ensuring the income of women is an essential precondition for the elimination of poverty and the upholding of human rights [2,7] in particular at the individual level, as it helps to build a base for social change [1,3]. The work of women in Bangladesh is mostly confined to the homestead due to cultural, religious and social restrictions. However, with the great decline of their socio-economic situation, rural women are breaking through the traditional norms and coming forward to participate in the development activities outside their homestead. Currently rural women in Bangladesh have an anchoring role in the management of their families as well

as participation in different income generating activities like crop production, livestock and poultry rearing, aquaculture etc. [9,14]. In Bangladesh, apart from government initiatives, a large number of non-government organizations are operating in rural areas, concentrating on rural women to change their livelihood [8]. Due to the direct and indirect support from these organizations, the capabilities of the involved women are increasing day by day, motivating them to participate in various income activities which are expected to eventually contribute to their household income. So, there is an urgent need to aware women to act upon swiftly to accomplish their total development of the society. There is an urgent need to aware women to act upon swiftly to accomplish their total development and the development of society. For livelihood improvement, at first we have to increase their level of awareness on development interventions. So, the main focus of the study is to determine awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement of rural women at Dumki Upazila in Patuakhali District in Bangladesh. Special attention is paid to the association of rural women with NGOs to better understand the functions of non-government organizations toward livelihood development.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted among the rural women in the village of Sreerampur of Dumki upazila under Patuakhali district. This upazila occupies an area of 95.15 square kilometer. The upazila is bounded on the north Bakergong upazila of Barisal District and Rajgonj River and on the east by Bauphal upazila of Patuakhali district and Lohalia River, on the south by Patuakhali sadar upazila and west by Mirjagong upazila of Patuakhali district. *Rural women of the selected* village were the population of the study. There were 1933 *farm families* in Sreerampur Union. *It* was considered that each family contained at least one *housewife* 108 housewives (around 6%) among the 1933 farm families were *the sample of the study*. In a research study requiring data, a structured interview schedule were used for collecting of relevant data for the study. Closed form questions were included in the schedule. Simple and direct questions were also included to ascertain the opinion of the women regarding a number of aspects. Scales were developed to measure awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement. The draft interview schedule was prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study. The interview schedule was pre-tested with 10 women from the study area. Necessary corrections, additions and modification were made in the interview schedule based

on the pretest results. The modified and corrected interview schedule was then printed in final form in English.

The researcher employed adequate care in selecting the variables of the study. Considering personal, economic, social and psychological factors of the rural community, time and resources availability to researcher, reviewing relevant literature and discussing with relevant expert, the researcher selected the variables for the study. Awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement was the main focus of this study and it was considered as the dependent variable. The researcher selected nine selected characteristics of the rural women as independent variables i.e. age, education, family size, training experience, household farm size, household annual income, communication exposure, fatalism, and credit received. After completion of field survey data from all the interview schedules were coded, compiled, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The analysis was performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer package. Descriptive analysis such as range, number and percentage, mean, standard deviation and rank order were used whenever possible. Pearson's Product Moment Co-efficient of Correlation was used in order to explore the relationship between the concerned variables. Throughout the study, at least five-percent (0.05) level of probability was used as basis of rejecting a null hypothesis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Characteristics of Respondents

Rural women possess various interrelated characteristics that might affect on the awareness of rural women on the issue of development interventions for livelihood improvement. However, the eleven selected characteristics of the rural women such as age, education, family size, training experience, farm size, annual income, communication exposure, fatalism, credit received, awareness of rural women on farm activities are likely to influence the awareness of rural women on development interventions have been presented below-

3.1.1. Age

The age of the rural women ranged from 18 to 70years with a mean and standard deviation of 36 .32 and 10.74 respectively. Considering the observed age of the rural women they were classified into three categories namely 'young aged (< 35 years)', 'middle aged (35-50 years)' and 'old aged (>50 years)' as shown in [Table 1](#). Number and percentage.

Table 1. Distribution of the rural women according to their age

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Young aged (below 35 years)	56	51.85	36.32	10.74
Middle aged (36-50 years)	39	36.11		
Old aged (above 50 years)	13	12.03		
Total	108	100		

Distributions of the respondents are presented in Table 1 according to their age category. Table 1 indicates that the young aged rural women constitute the highest proportion (51.85 percent) followed by middle aged category (36.11 percent) and old aged category (12.03percent). Thus, the young and middle aged rural women constitute about 87.96 percent of the respondents. In the rural society of Bangladesh maintains traditional norms, values and customs are maintained in order to continue sustainable family and social impact relationship among the people. An overwhelming majority of rural women being young and middle aged they can keep the society living involving in family, social and other welfare activities. The young and middle aged rural women are perceived as the most potential and productive group from the view point of development. Therefore, they are much more aware of their legitimate social power. If they could have opportunity and scope to share power with their male counterpart surely they would be able to break through toward development.

3.1.2. Education

The educational scores of the rural women ranged from 0 to 12 with a mean and standard deviation of 3.46 and 3.6, respectively. Based on their educational scores, the rural women were classified into four categories such as 'illiterate' (0), 'primary education' (1 to 5), 'secondary education' (6 to 10), higher secondary and above (above 10). The distribution of the rural women according to their level of education has been presented in fable 4.2.Data in the Table 2 show that a large proportion (37.96%) are illiterate, 33.41% had Primary education,25.93% had secondary and only 3.70% had above secondary level.

However, overall educational level in the society was not satisfactory. Education broadens the horizon of outlook of rural women and expands their capability to analyze any situation. It also helps them to be aware of sharing of power.

3.1.3. Family Size

Family size of the rural women ranged from 2 to 14 with an average of 4.83 and Standard deviation is 1.70. The highest proportion 45.37% were found having small family, 41.67 percent of the respondents were found having medium family, while only 12.96 percent had large family. Based on their family size scores, the rural women were classified into three categories such as Small family size (up to 4), Medium family size (5-6), large family size (above 6). The distribution of the rural women according to their family size has been presented in Table 3.

3.1.4. Training Experience

Training experience of the rural women ranged from 0 to 8 with an average of 1.69 and Standard deviation is 2.08. The highest proportion 43.51% were found having Low Training, 39.81 percent of the respondents were found having no training, 12.03 percent of the respondents were found having moderate training experience, while only 4.63 percent had long training experience . Based on their training experience scores, the respondents were grouped into four categories as "no training experience" (0), "short training experience" (1-3), "moderate training experience" (4 - 6), and "long training experience" (above 7). The distributions of the rural women are shown in the following Table 4.

Table 2. Distribution of the rural women according to their education

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Illiterate (0)	41	37.96	3.46	3.6
Primary education (1-5)	35	33.41		
Secondary education (6-10)	28	25.93		
Above secondary (above 10)	4	3.70		
Total	108	100		

Table 3. Distribution of the rural women according to their family size

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Small family size(up to 4)	49	45.37	4.83	1.70
Medium family size (5-6)	45	41.67		
Large family size (above 6)	14	12.96		
Total	108	100		

Table 4. Distribution of the rural women according to their training experience

Categories	Number of respondents	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
No Training (0)	43	39.81	1.69	2.08
Short Training (1-3)	47	43.51		
Moderate Training (4-6)	13	12.03		
Long Training (above 7)	5	4.63		
Total	108	100		

3.1.5. Farm Size

The household farm size scores of the rural women are ranged from 0.01 hectare to 2.34 hectare. The average farm sizes of the rural women are 0.28 hectare with a standard deviation of 0.29. Depending on the farm size, the rural women are classified into five categories as 0.02 ha "landless" "Marginal" less than .021-.2 ha, "small farm size" (.21 - 1ha), "medium farm size" (1.1-3.00 ha), "large farm size" (above 3 ha) and shown in [Table 5](#).

Majority (48.14 percent) of the rural women household had marginal farm size, 43.51 percent of them having small, and 3.70 percent medium and 3.70 percent found to be landless. The most of the women were marginal to small operating their farms. This information shows that farm size with their lease taken land of the rural women land properties.

3.1.6. Household Annual Income

Annual income score of the respondents ranged from 54.00 - 464.20 and the average was 101.21 with a standard deviation of 56.98. According to the family income the rural women were classified in to three categories ([Table 6](#)). Based on their annual income scores, the rural women were classified into three categories such as Low income (54-100), Medium income (101-150) and High income (151-above).

Data furnished in [Table 6](#) indicate that the highest proportion (75.93 Percent) of the rural women had low

annual income, while 19.44 percent rural women had medium and 4.63 percent had high family income. It also showed that majority (95.37 percent) rural women constituted low to medium income category. As majority of the rural women had low income it is quite likely that they might face considerable problem confrontation. The low income of the rural women might be due to their small farm size and illiteracy. The gross annual income of a rural woman is an important indicator of how much she can invest in farming.

3.1.7. Communication Exposure

The communication exposure scores of the rural women ranged from 17-37. The mean and standard deviation were 26.60 and 7.13 respectively. Based on observed communication exposure scores, the rural women were classified into three categories viz. "low communication exposure" (0-17), "medium communication exposure" (18-27), and "high communication exposure" (above 28). The distribution of rural women based of the scores are shown in the following [Table 7](#).

About one half (50.93 percent) of the rural women had medium communication exposure to different communication sources, and 26.85 percent of the rural women had low communication exposure. Only 22.22 percent of the rural women had high communication exposure. The poor exposure to various sources of information is likely to be the root cause of inadequate knowledge, skill and practice of modern technology.

Table 5. Distribution of the farmers according to their household farm size

Categories	Farmers		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Landless (>.20ha)	5	4.62	0.28	0.29
Marginal farm (.21 - .2 ha)	52	48.14		
Small farm(.21 - 1ha)	47	43.51		
Medium farm(1.1-3.00 ha)	4	3.70		
Large farm(above 3 ha)	0	0.00		
Total	108	100.0		

Table 6. Distribution of the rural women according to their household annual income

Categories according to annual income	Respondent		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low income (54-100)	82	75.93	101.21	56.98
Medium income (101-150)	21	19.44		
High income (151-above)	5	4.63		
Total	108	100		

Table 7. Distribution of the rural women according to their communication exposure

Categories	Respondent		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low communication exposure(0-17)	29	26.85	26.60	7.13
Medium communication exposure(17- 27)	55	50.93		
High communication exposure(above 28)	24	22.22		
Total	108	100.0		

3.1.8. Fatalism

The fatalism scores of the rural women ranged from 7 to 26 .The mean and standard deviation were 14.52 and 4.83 respectively. On the basis of observed score of fatalism, the respondents were classified into three categories such as, "low" fatalism (0 -13), "moderate fatalism" (14 -19), and "high fatalism "(20 - 26). The distribution of the respondents based on their fatalism score is shown in the [Table 8](#).

The majority (47.22percent) of the rural women had moderate fatalism compared to 42.59 percent of them having low fatalism and 10.19 percent in high fatalism category. Thus, majority (89.81) of rural women had low to moderate fatalism.

3.1.9. Credit Received

The Credit received scores of the rural women ranged from 0 to 150000 .The mean and standard deviation were 48.83 and 99.71 respectively. On the basis of observed score of credit received the respondents were classified into three categories such as, "low Credit received" (0 -40000), "moderate Credit received" (41000 -80000), and "high Credit received "(81000 - 150000). The distribution of the respondents based on their Credit received score is shown in the [Table 9](#).

The majority (54.63percent) of the rural women had taken Low credit compared to 29.63percent of them having Moderate credit and 15.74 percent in high category.

Thus, majority (84.26 percent) of rural women had received low to moderate credit.

3.1.10. Awareness of Rural Women on Farm Activities

Awareness of rural women on the issue of empowerment score of a respondent was determined by adding scores obtained by an individual against all the 25 statements. Awareness of rural women on the issue of development intervention scores ranged from 23 to 68. The awareness of rural women score ranged from 23-68 and the average being 47.54 with standard deviation 11.56. Based on the obtained score of awareness towards rural women the respondent classified into three categories namely low awareness, medium awareness and high awareness. Among the respondents the highest 42.59 percent belongs to the medium awareness group followed by 29.63 percent belonging in high awareness group and 27.78 percent low awareness group. Among the rural women of the study area a total of 72.22 percent had awareness on development interventions to the extent of medium to high. The rural women were more or less aware of such as - husband and wife possess equal right, access to decision making, access to social arbitration, access to politics, access to education, access to income generating activities, access to business, access to group information, access to religious activities, access to purchase of land.

Table 8. Distribution of the rural women according to their fatalism

Categories	Farmers		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low fatalism(7 -13)	46	42.59	14.52	4.83
Moderate fatalism(14 -19)	51	47.22		
High fatalism(20 - 26)	11	10.19		
Total	108	100.0		

Table 9. Distribution of the rural women according to their credit received

Categories	Respondent		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low credit received(0 -40000)	59	54.63	48.83	99.71
Moderate credit received(41000 -80000)	32	29.63		
High credit received(81000 - 150000)	17	15.74		
Total	108	100.0		

Table 10. Distribution of the rural women according to their awareness on development interventions

Categories	Respondent		Mean	Standard deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low awareness (below 39)	30	27.78	47.54	11.56
Medium awareness (40-55)	46	42.59		
High awareness (above 55)	32	29.63		
Total	108	100		

Table 11. Co-efficient of correlation showing relationship between dependent (awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement) and independent variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Value of coefficient of correlation
Awareness of rural women on development Interventions	Age	-.453**
	Education	.237*
	Family size	-.225*
	Training experience	.221*
	Farm size	.010
	Annual income	.114
	Communication exposure	.236*
	Fatalism	-.134
	Credit received	.139

* =significant at .05 level;**= significant at .01 level.

3.2. Relationship of Selected Characteristics of Rural Women with Their Awareness on Development Interventions for Livelihood Improvement

Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient was computed in order to find out the extent of relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. To reject a null hypothesis at 0.05 level of probability was used as the basis. The findings on the correlation tests are presented in Table 11.

3.2.1. Relationship between Age and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between age and awareness of rural women on development interventions was examined found negatively significant at 1% level of probability ($r = -0.453$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be accepted indicating that age of the respondents have significant negative relationship with their awareness on development interventions.

This represents that with the increases of age of the respondent's awareness level decreases. Aged rural farm women are usually traditional and less exposed with the surrounding environment. This attribute may have helped to establish such relationship.

3.2.2. Relationship between Education Level and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between education and awareness of rural women on development interventions was found positively significant at 5% level of probability ($r = 0.237$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be accepted indicating that education level had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions. This represent that with the increases of education level of the respondent's awareness level also increases.

Education broadens the horizon of knowledge and perception. This may be a potential reason for increasing awareness of farm women on development interventions with the increase of knowledge.

3.2.3. Relationship between Family Size and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between family size and awareness of rural women on development interventions was found negative and statistically significant at 5% level of probability ($r = -0.225$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be accepted indicating that family size had significant negative relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions. This represents that with the increase of family size of the respondent's awareness level decreases. Thus it can be said, those who have large farm family tend to give more time in managing their family resulting in less available time for looking around the surroundings. As a result they become less aware about the development interventions.

3.2.4. Relationship between Training Experience and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between training experience and awareness of rural women on development interventions was found positive and statistically significant at 5% level of probability ($r = 0.221$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be accepted indicating that training experience had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions. This represents that with the increases of training experience of the respondent's awareness level also increases. Farm women come into contact with various information sources while receiving training. Thus, those who received training may have formed awareness on development interventions.

3.2.5. Relationship between Farm Size and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Intervention

The co-efficient of correlation between farm size and awareness of rural women on development interventions was positive but insignificant at 5% level of probability ($r = 0.010$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be rejected indicating that farm size had insignificant relationship but followed a positive trend with awareness of rural women on development interventions. Thus it can be said that farm size of the rural women does not have a

significant role in forming awareness of rural women on development interventions.

3.2.6. Relationship between Annual Income and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Intervention

The co-efficient of correlation between annual income and awareness of rural women on development interventions was positive but insignificant at 5% level of probability ($r= 0.114$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be rejected indicating that annual income had insignificant relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions but showed a positive trend. This represents that annual income of the rural women had a non significant role in forming awareness of rural women on development interventions.

3.2.7. Relationship between Communication Exposure and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between communication exposure and awareness of rural women on development interventions was positive and statistically significant at 5% level of probability ($r =0.236$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be accepted indicating that communication exposure had significant positive relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions. Thus it can be said that with the increase of communication exposure of the respondents, awareness level also increases. Rural farm women who are exposed to various sources of communication are tend to be up-to-date with development initiatives. This may have helped in forming their awareness on development interventions.

3.2.8. Relationship between Fatalism and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Intervention

The co-efficient of correlation between fatalism and awareness of rural women on development interventions was negative and insignificant at 5% level of probability ($r =- 0.134$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be rejected indicating that fatalism had insignificant relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions but it showed a negative trend. This represents that fatalism of the rural women had a non significant role in forming awareness of rural women on development interventions.

3.2.9. Relationship between Credit Received and Awareness of Rural Women on Development Interventions

The co-efficient of correlation between awareness of rural women on development interventions showed positive trend and statistically was insignificant at 5% level of probability ($r =0.139$). Therefore, null hypothesis could not be rejected indicating that credit received had insignificant relationships with awareness of rural women on development interventions. This represent that credit received by the rural women had a non significant role in forming awareness of rural women on development interventions.

3.2.10. Relationship between Selected Characteristics of the Respondents and Their Awareness on Development Interventions for Livelihood Improvement

Correlation analysis indicated that age and family size had negative significant relationship with awareness on development interventions while education, training experience and communication exposure had positive significant relationship with awareness on development. However, farm size, annual income and credit received had non-significant but positive relationship with respondents' awareness on development interventions. Fatalism showed non-significant but negative relationship with their awareness on development interventions.

4. Conclusion

A conclusion may be looked upon as an inference on findings of empirical study, pertinent facts and unbiased judgments. This research tried to best to make this study meaningful. Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Among the rural women the highest 42.59 percent belongs to the medium awareness group followed by 29.63 percent belonging in high awareness group. This result is not satisfactory. GOs and NGOs are works together to aware women for involving themselves into various development interventions. Without being aware they can't actively engage themselves into various development interventions.
2. Among the rural women young aged constitute the highest proportion (51.85 percent). Therefore, it may be concluded that above half of the women of the study area were young aged.
3. The highest 37.96 percent of women are illiterate or can sign only and 32.41 percent in primary level. Therefore, it may be concluded that the education level of the women of that area were not satisfactory level.
4. The highest proportion 45.37% were found having small family ,41.67percent of the respondents were found having medium family, while only 12.96 percent had large family. Therefore, it may be concluded that large families are divided into small families.
5. The highest proportion 43.51% were found having Low Training, 39.81 percent of the respondents were found having no training , 12.03 percent of the respondents were found having moderate training experience, while only 4.63 percent had long training experience. Therefore, it may be concluded that training experience of the women of that area were not satisfactory level.
6. About one half (52.89 percent) of the rural women had medium communication exposure to different communication sources, and 26.85 percent of the rural women had low communication exposure. Therefore, it may be concluded that communication exposure of the women of that area were not satisfactory level.

4.1. Recommendations

4.1.1. Recommendation for Policy Implication

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study following recommendation are made for policy implication:

1. Concerned authorities should undertake appropriate strategies like ensuring more women's participation in training, agricultural fair, campaigns, exhibitions, using mass media for increasing rural women's awareness on development interventions.
2. Most of the respondent's educational status was not satisfactory while education was found having significant positive relationship with awareness. So necessary literacy programs should be undertaken to educate women by different GOs and NGOs so that women can be aware about their position in the family and society.
3. Most of the respondents had received low to no training. However training experience had positive significant relationship with awareness of farm family. So the government extension organizations and NGOs should provide training to aware member of farm families which may help them to be aware of development interventions.
4. As majority of respondents had moderate to low communication exposure, government extension agencies should help rural women to have more contact with model farmers, campaigns, agricultural fair, extensions workers etc.

4.1.2. Recommendation for Further Study

The following recommendations are put forwarded for further research studies:

1. The present study was conducted only in one village under Patuakhali district. Similar studies may be undertaken in other area of Bangladesh with same socio-economic conditions.
2. There are various dimensions by which awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement can be measured. Further study may be conducted by considering the different dimension of development interventions.
3. Relationship of nine characteristics of women was investigated in this study. Further research should be conducted to explore relationship of other

characteristics of the women for measuring awareness of rural women on development interventions for livelihood improvement.

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