ABSTRACT

Lifelong education is an important element in society's response to the new changes and challenges. The present study, titled “Lifelong Learning Aspirations and their Correlates of Rural Women in Dindigul District”, was taken up because there were no data available about either the aspirations of rural women or about the opportunities and facilities available to fulfill their aspirations.

The objectives of the study were: (i) to identify the lifelong learning aspirations of selected women; (ii) to identify the influence of variables, namely, age, educational and occupational status, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child’s age and husband’s educational status, on the lifelong learning aspirations of women; and, (iii) to find out the facilities available for fulfilling the lifelong learning aspirations of rural women.

The major hypothesis tested was that the socio-economic variables, namely, age, educational status, occupational status, family income, community, marital status, type of family, number of children, youngest child’s age and husband’s educational status, influence the lifelong learning aspirations of rural women.

The subjects of the study included 100 illiterates, 100 school dropouts, 140 higher secondary educated women and 160 graduates. They were selected by multistage sampling method. The tools used for data collection included an interview schedule and a questionnaire.
Totally forty olglit courses / subjects were stated by the respondents as the courses which they preferred to undergo / join. These courses were textiles, craft, production, health, personal development, technical, fine arts, academic, farm and family living related courses. Tailoring (74%), wire basket making (51%), food production (46%), healthy living (44%), spoken English (42%), computer course (42%), interior decoration (28%), undergraduate or postgraduate degree (22%), child care (13%) and kitchen gardening (14%) were the courses preferred by the largest number of respondents under each category.

The respondents’ aspirations were based on their desire to add to family income, to satisfy personal desires, for economic independence, for acquiring skills for day-to-day use, for furthering their knowledge, for guiding their children and to be in the company of friends, and, compulsion by family members.

As for the influence of variables, education had the highest influence on course selection. Age, community and marital status of the respondents influenced their aspirations to a certain extent. The number of children, the youngest child's age and husband’s educational status did not influence their aspiration to continue their studies.

The majority of the respondents were not aware of the Continuing Education facilities made available by the Government. Knowledge of the Open University system varied with the education level.

The study has brought out the need for the Continuing Education Programmes of the Government to provide opportunities for fulfilling the aspirations of women through the continuing education centres in villages.