

Access to and use of Tobacco Production Health Hazard Information Sources by Tobacco Farmers in Kuria West Sub – County, Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract

Tobacco production poses serious dangers to tobacco farmers especially in developing countries. Previous studies have shown that tobacco production activities continue to expose tobacco farmers to health risk. This study examines sources of health hazard information that tobacco farmers in Kuria West Sub- County of Migori County, Kenya access and use in an effort to protect themselves. The data was collected from a sample size of 100 tobacco farmers and 41 key informants. A representative sample was chosen from the four selected wards of Kuria West Sub-County. Software Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data. A major finding was that majority of tobacco farmers used various sources of information whose adequacy about potential risks associated with the crop farming remained a challenge. The paper concludes that, the sources of information that tobacco farmers relied on are unreliable and not trustworthy. The study recommends the establishment of Non- partisan organisations to train and disseminate relevant information on health hazards to tobacco farmers.

Keywords: Access, Health Hazards Information, Kenya, Kuria West, Tobacco Farmers, Use

1. Introduction

Prior to seventeenth century tobacco products were consumed by the rich and royal families. This was much before tobacco was linked to causing cancer. According to Sneiders' (2021), study in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic tobacco was seen as novelty before consumption was linked to negative effects. Tobacco control efforts came in the 1990s when documents of the tobacco industry began to be made public for the first time by company insiders. The dangers of tobacco

made manufacturing companies to assume Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in order to improve their public image and advance their political objectives; main aim was to thwart or undermine tobacco control policies (McDaniel, Cadman & Malone, 2016). In Kenya, tobacco farming dates back to 1907 when the British American Tobacco (BAT) Company set up a marketing organization at the country's coastal city of Mombasa for distribution and marketing network throughout East Africa. In 1967 East Africa tobacco split into three firms, with the establishment of branches in Kenya, Uganda, and

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Tanzania. Immediately after the split, BAT (K) pursued a policy of promoting profitable production by contracting small-scale farmers.

A study by Malangu (2017) attributed the differences in tobacco production approaches to insufficient level of knowledge about tobacco production health hazards by native African farmers. Countries such as USA and Britain for example put measures in place to protect the producers of tobacco from health hazards. The practice of dissemination of health hazards information and protection of farmers is generally not practiced in developing countries such as Kenya. This has led to exploitation of farmers by multi-national tobacco manufacturing companies. Access to and use of information on the dangers associated with tobacco farming would lead to more productive and profitable farming for stakeholders in developing countries. According to Mugwisi (2015) the repackaging of information could involve translating basic information including precautionary measures into local languages and made available to farmers. The author suggested the use of such channels as local radio and television. Achieving this requires a multi-stakeholder industry approach with government playing a central role to put in place the right legislation, policies, frameworks, and effective communication channels that ensure tobacco farmers are equipped with information pertinent to tobacco health hazards and are also legally protected where these are flouted. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate various informational sources that tobacco farmers in Kuria West Sub-County access and use.

2. Statement of the Problem

Tobacco production has remained a global concern due to health hazards associated with it. Due to these hazards, diseases such as cancer, stomach ailments, miscarriages among pregnant mothers, and skin irritation are witnessed. These revelations have made stakeholders such as World Health Organisation (WHO) and Kenya's National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA), strive to communicate information about the dangers of using tobacco products with a view to discourage the public from its consumption. However, it is not clear about how tobacco farmers in developing countries access and use tobacco production health

hazards information to caution them. This study seeks to fill this gap.

3. Literature Review

Tobacco farmers can access relevant information from many sources; e.g., a human expert such as an agricultural extension officer, a health expert or a health advocate or activist. Also such information could be sought from a source such as a book, journal, blog or a library. Sources of information that this study focused on are; rural library, rural information centre, mass media and agricultural extension services.

3.1 Rural Library

Tobacco farmers need information about tobacco production health hazards. A rural library as an institution is charged with the responsibility of identifying, selecting, acquiring, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating information. This may be a suitable organ to serve the interests of tobacco farmers. Information access as an interaction means that tobacco farmers can be empowered in order to access and put to use relevant information that safeguards their health and communities against the ravages that are otherwise caused by tobacco farming. Islam and Ahmed's (2012), study on rural library services: A qualitative assessment of information provision in selected rural communities in Northern district of Bangladesh, found that people in the rural areas were not availed with information that concerns them in order to manage their social obligations or become responsible for their lives and better informed citizens. A local library should be an entity to serve the tobacco farmers with relevant information on tobacco production health hazards. The library plays a big role in solving problems through the provision of relevant information to farmers. Although a library is considered to serve educated users or learners in formal sectors, rural library contains collections brought in by government, non-governmental organizations and those produced in the area.

Omogor's (2013) study on channels of information acquisition and dissemination of information among rural dwellers concluded that each community should be able to develop the type of library services that suits

and enhances its social goals and development objectives. The study showed that a channel of information dissemination may be appropriate to a certain group on information seekers, it is therefore important to repackage information in a medium that is easily understood by a targeted group of people. While Ugah's (2007), research on obstacles of information access and use in developing countries, observed that the role of libraries has not always been made clear to information seekers, particularly in developing countries. The author further argues that library services have remained in the domain of urban dwellers targeting learners and researchers with little regard to rural farmers. In the absence of such an institution, tobacco farmers may fail to get prerequisite information on tobacco health hazards and its smooth flow. In support Islam and Ahmed's (2012) added that library plays an important role of dissemination agricultural information.

3.2 Rural Information Resource Centre (RIRC)

Rural Information Resource Centre (RIRC) is an established Centre that is charged with the responsibility of acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating information needed by the community it serves. RIRC emphasize on taking the information to the people who need it most. RIRC is another source for tobacco farmers because it does paper clipping and arrange for discussion meetings, seminars and workshop covering latest ideas, topics and experience for rural development. In a study by Islam (2009) titled the community development library in Bangladesh, found that RIRCs in Bangladesh are used to enable sharing of ideas and views among workers. This can as well help people in the rural to equip themselves with the modern trends and practices. The author further found that RIRC arranges for displays and exhibitions about things that affect them by means of using various formats such as books, training manuals, posters, videos, etc. and collects information pertinent to local areas and make it known to them through notice boards. In areas where such important facility does not exist, rural farmers such as tobacco farmers stand to lose in terms of necessary information that could help them solve their problems in relation to tobacco production health hazards.

3.3 Mass Media

Tobacco farmers stand to benefit when information on tobacco production is transmitted or broadcasted immediately through the mass media. This is because it captures the widest possible audience. The transmission can be through television, internet or radio broadcast. According to Bello and Obinne's (2012), study on problems and prospects of agricultural information sources utilization by small scale farmers: A case from Nasarawa state of Nigeria, concludes that interpersonal channel and mass media communication strategies are applicable sources of disseminating information to farmers. The author further argues that it is unlikely to eradicate inaccessibility and information utilization among farming communities in the absence of education, material resources and technical skills.

3.3.1 Television Broadcast

Television broadcast is a medium through which information is transmitted for reception through a television set with the right signal channel. When this happens any one can receive information and possibly share it out with a tobacco farmer who did not own the television set or who did not tune to the signal channel. The fact that there are agricultural programme presented through television broadcast, they are mainly watched by people who are living in urban set up. In a study on Information access in Africa: problem with every channel by Wresch's (1998) showed that in Kenya and Bangladesh newspapers are a more significant sources of information than television and people who own a television set watch American reruns. The findings complicate matters of information access and use for tobacco farmers in Kenya because they lack proper targeted programme. Tobacco farmers require to access information on tobacco production health hazards through arranged programmes on television broadcast and radio station to educate farmers on the hazards on specific known time.

3.3.2 Internet

Internet is a global computer network with an aim of providing a variety of information and communication facilities using standardized communication protocol. Internet services have become an important tool for facilitating information access. These services are not

commonly used in the rural areas of Migori County, Kenya because of poor electricity and network connectivity and economic difficulties.

Wresch's (1998) further reveals that what is found in the standard information age is irony; the richer an African nation was, the lower its internet costs, while the poorer a nation, the more it has to pay for information. Tobacco farmers can access information anytime and anywhere through their personal electronic devices. Farmers in developing countries are the most disadvantaged in terms of information access and use due to poor internet and electricity connectivity and high cost tariffs. According to a study on Influences of social networking site and user access method by Heinrichs, Lim and Lim (2011), found that social networking sites can be used to develop contents, share ideas and opinions and disseminate them the acquired information and knowledge through electronic devices. Although these findings are true, the authors added that farmers may lack the required technical skill to use their hands electronic devices.

Information access and use may also be affected by lack of awareness, inaccessibility, poverty, ignorance among others. While the study on promoting the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for agricultural transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa by Ajani (2014) shows that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can help a small scale farmer to get relevant information regarding agro-input, crop production technologies, agro-processing and the management of farm enterprise. Tobacco farmers in the rural areas can use their handset devices to search and access information pertinent to them although this is at a minimal in developing countries. This would only be possible if they are skilled on the usage are facilitated through electricity and internet connectivity.

3.3.3 Radio Broadcast

Radio broadcasting is a medium of mass communication capable of reaching all audience regardless of age, gender, class or technological knowhow. This is because of low cost, portability ease and easy access. Tobacco farmers can access tobacco production health hazards information and educated on the best way of dealing with illness and injuries through a radio station programme. According to the study on Effectiveness of the Radio as a health information source by Smith, Menn and Mckyer (2011)

indicated that to accommodate the gap between actual and preferred methods of critical health information acquisition, health educators and professionals should often utilize a multifaceted approach when producing health education campaigns. The authors also found that radio broadcast increases knowledge levels and individual intention to positively modify health behaviour. The study further shows that to successfully utilize a theory to incite behaviour change, health professionals must understand the characteristics of their audience and how that audience can be most effectively reached and influenced. Scheduled programme on tobacco health hazards can reach tobacco farmers through radio broadcast because a farmer can easily listen to a radio set or a mobile cell phone radio while working.

According to a study on trusted information sources used during and after Super storm sandy by Burger *et al.* (2013) indicated that during the time of the problem, people rely on a functioning source of information and radio still remains one of the key sources of information for all ages. The study further indicated that sources of information used and the sources available depended upon the kind of information required. Tobacco farmers can make use of a local radio broadcast station which uses a local language that is understood by all regardless of academic standing. Lwoga *et al.* (2011) study on Access and use of agricultural information and knowledge in Tanzania show that large number of farmers in the rural area use radio as a source of information and an appropriate channel through which they get information orally. This channel is cheap and is not dependent of electricity connectivity unlike other technologies and formats. In order to increase the use of information through print there is need for programmes that would sensitize tobacco farmers on the importance of print materials as a reliable source of information.

3.4 Agricultural Extension Services

Agricultural programmes are designed to provide timely information and education to farmers on a wide range of information for agricultural products, rural development, enhance awareness of relevant information sources and strengthen the capacity to produce, acquire, exchange and utilize information concerning their agricultural activities. In a study on mapping and auditing agricultural indigenous knowledge in Kenya by Kiplang'at and Rotich

(2012) found that improved farming methods among the farmers is lacking due to inadequate extension services and result into farmers using their indigenous methods that may not be effective in the modern farming. This study shows that tobacco farmers can grow tobacco sustainably by utilizing modern farming knowledge.

According to the study on Access and use of agricultural information and knowledge in Tanzania by Lwoga *et al.* (2011) further shows that farmers predominantly rely on friends, neighbours and family, followed by public extension service as the major sources of information. While according to study by Lukuyu *et al.* (2012) on disseminating improved practices: are volunteer farmers effective? Showed that farmer trainer can play critical role in mobilizing and training fellow farmers, hosting demonstration plots among others. Farmer trainer approach has the potential to disseminate technologies to farmers in a cost effective way that is long lasting because of home-grown confidence. Lukuyu *et al.* (2012) further found that there is need for farmer trainer to be embraced by the stake holders such as Governments, NGOs and private sectors. A farmer trainer equipped with necessary skills for disseminating information will easily win the support of fellow farmers because of the sense of belonging.

4. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods in

data collection. Creswell (2014) states that research design is the philosophical assumption the researcher brings to the study in terms of procedures of inquiry. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting four (4) wards from the seven (7) wards of Kuria West Sub – County, Migori County, Kenya. The four (4) selected wards were Nyamosense/Komosoko, Tagare, Masaba and Bukira Central/Ikerege and the excluded wards were Bukira East, Makerero and Isbania. The selection and exclusion of wards was based on the criteria of geographical spread, urban settlement, and numerical strength of tobacco farmers. Simple random sampling was then employed to select tobacco farmers and Key Informants within the selected wards. However, Kuria West Sub-County Agriculture officer was picked purely on purpose because he was the only chief coordinator of all the agricultural activities in the Sub-county. The accessible population from the targeted sample of 8857 tobacco farmers and 98 key informants was calculated using Nassiuma (2000) formulas for determining sample size:

$$\text{The sample size } n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)\ell^2}$$

where: n is the sample size, N is the population size C is coefficient of variation ($\leq 30\%$) and ℓ is the standard error/level of precision/error. According to Nassiuma C = 0.25 (25%) and $\ell = 0.05$ (5%) is acceptable for survey carried out on the population. Therefore, the details of the sampling procedure and sample size are shown in the Tables 1&2.

Table 1. Tobacco farmers in Kuria West

Sl. No.	Name of Wards	Target No. of Tobacco Farmers	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
1.	Beukira Central/ Ikerege	2037	25	Simple Random
2.	Masaba	1530	25	Simple Random
3.	Tagare/Gitonganya	1231	25	Simple Random
4.	Nyamosense/ Komosoko	1224	25	Simple Random
	Total		100	

Table 2. Health care providers in Kuria West Sub-County health facilities

Name of Wards	Name of Health Facilities	Target no. of Health Care providers	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
	Kehancha level IV	30	13	Simple Random
Bukira central/ Ikerege	Nyabokarange Health Centre	3	3	Simple Random
„	Mogori Komasimo Health Centre	6	5	Simple Random
„	Komomange dispensary	1	1	„
Masaba	Masaba Health Centre	3	3	„
„	Kohanga Dispensary	1	1	„
„	Kombe Dispensary	2	2	„
Tagare	Nyangoge Health Centre	3	3	Simple Random
„	Nyamekongoroto Health Centre	3	3	Simple Random
„	Bugumbe health centre	3	3	„
Nyamosense/ Komosoko	Getongoroma dispensary	1	1	Simple Random
„	Komosoko dispensary	2	2	Simple Random

Key informants were people whose social positions in society are highly regarded and are knowledgeable with valuable information. The researcher chose key Informants, in order to gather a wide range of information for this study.

The researcher interviewed 100 tobacco farmers, 40 health care providers and Kuria West Sub-County Agricultural Officer. Thus, a total of 141 respondents participated in this study.

5. Findings

5.1 Access and usage of Information Sources

This section concerns itself with whether tobacco farmers access and use any source of information on tobacco production health hazards. The Figure 1 shows

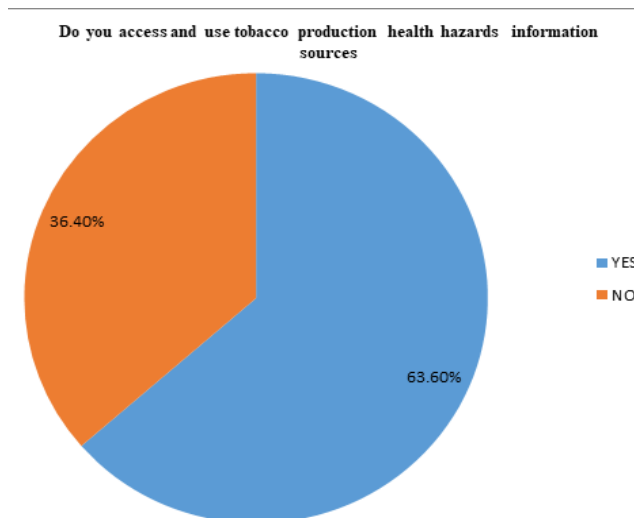


Figure 1. The distribution of access and usage tobacco production health hazards information sources.

that a majority of 63.6% of the farmers access and use information in various sources, while 36.4% do not access and use any source of information on tobacco production health hazards.

5.2 Type of Information Sources Accessed

Table 3 indicates that 36.40% did not use an information source, 19.00% used informal sources, 18.18% used tobacco manufacturing companies as their main source of information, 12.39% of tobacco farmers used Government agencies. Only 4.13% and 2.47% of tobacco farmers used rural information resource centre and rural library as their sources of information respectively. The results of this study on the usage of information sources indicated that majority of tobacco farmers in Kuria West Sub-County depend on informal sources for tobacco production health hazards information while tobacco manufacturing companies for example, BAT (K) became their main formal source of information. Clearly, the dependence on and use of formal information providers such as the rural library, rural information resource centre, agricultural extension services, and mass media such as radio and TV was minimal. This did not correspond with the existing literature (Islam and Ahmed, 2012; Omogor, 2013; Ugah,

2007; Rashid, 2000; Islam, 2009; Bello & Obinne, 2012). However, there is literature to suggest that in the absence of information institutions people predominantly rely on any alternative informal functioning source of information such as local neighbours, friends and family during the time of problem (Burger, *et al.*, 2013; Lwoga *et al.*, 2011). Both tobacco farmers and health care providers agree that radio could be channel of communication to tobacco farmers. This is supported by reviewed literature (Lwoga *et al.*, 2011; Smith, Menn & Mackyer, 2011). The findings are also supported by Wilson's (1999) model of information seeking behaviour which says that when relevant information become a challenge, a person with information need either give up or go back and seek information from the available alternative source of information.

5.3 Do Tobacco Farmers Face challenges in Accessing Information Sources

Figure 2 indicates that 59% of tobacco farmers reported that they face challenges in accessing and using tobacco production health hazards information sources.

The lack of institutional support for providing information and the lack of a formal programme to

Table 3. Type of information sources accessed

	Responses	
	No.	Percent
Rural library	3	2.47%
Rural information resource centre	5	4.13%
Television	1	0.82%
Radio broadcast	8	6.61%
Government agencies	15	12.39%
Tobacco manufacturing companies	22	18.18%
Informal sources (friends, fellow farmers, internet, newspapers)	23	19.00%
No source	44	36.4%
Total	120	100%

Table 4. Type of challenges tobacco farmers face in accessing tobacco production health hazards Information

Challenges	Responses	
	N	Percent
Lack of sensitization	48	36.92
Lack of institution	50	38.46
No support from government	22	16.92
Financial difficulties	10	7.70
Total	130	100

Do you face challenges in accessing tobacco production health hazards information sources

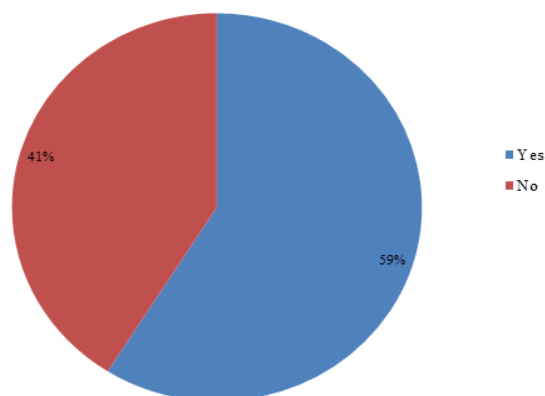


Figure 2. The distribution of whether tobacco farmers face in accessing information sources.

sensitize farmers of the potential health hazards appear to be the major challenges. The findings of this study show that majority of tobacco farmers in Kuria West Sub-County Migori, Kenya lack an institution that is charged with the responsibility of information provision (Table 4).

5.4 Frequency of Accessing Information Sources

Table 5 indicates that higher use of certain information source leads to greater awareness of tobacco production health hazards. Table 5 also demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between awareness of health hazards and frequency of accessing information sources. This implies that the awareness of tobacco health hazards is positively influenced by the frequency of accessing

Table 5. Correlations on frequency of accessing information sources

		Awareness of health Hazards	Frequency of Accessing Information Sources
Awareness of health Hazards	Pearson Correlation	1	.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	95	95
Frequency of Accessing Information Sources	Pearson Correlation	.385**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	95	95

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed).

Table 6. Correlation on the helpfulness of information sources

		Awareness of health Hazards	Helpful Information sources
Awareness of health Hazards	Pearson Correlation	1	.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	95	95
Helpful Information sources	Pearson Correlation	.368**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	95	95

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 levels (2-tailed).

information sources. Therefore, the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 6 shows that awareness of tobacco production health hazards is influenced positively by the helpfulness of the information source.

6. Conclusion

The study shows that majority of tobacco farmers in Kuria West Sub-County have a certain source of information to access and use information about tobacco production health hazards. The consulted information sources are neither formal nor the best source for health hazards information; informal sources still remain the alternative sources of information. The study clearly reveals that tobacco farmers still lack suitable information disseminators and necessary sensitisation on tobacco production health hazards.

7. Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. Tobacco manufacturing companies should not be left to be the main source of information for tobacco farmers as there is a conflict of interest.
2. Non-partisan organizations such as rural libraries, rural information resource centre, agricultural extension services and Ministry of health should be set up to train tobacco farmers about tobacco production health hazards in Kuria West.

3. The County of Migori and national Government should step in to equip tobacco farmers with necessary information that would guarantee their safety while engaging in activities of tobacco production.

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