

A study on communication behaviour of extension personnel

Communication and information play very important role in public as well as private extension. Information is a critical resource in the operation and management of extension organizations. Timely availability of relevant information is vital for effective performance of managerial functions such as planning, organizing, leading and control. An information system in an organization is like a nervous system in the human body. It is the link that connects all the organizations components together and provides for better operation and survival in a competitive environment. Indian farmers will have to be more competitive and quality oriented to find an established berth in the global market. Given the support of government policies, good infrastructural facilities, technological innovations and clean post harvest management practices, millions of small and marginal farmers will stand up to meet the demand of the international market. The need of the hour is to have thorough understanding of the communication process and communication skills by the extension workers of the Karnataka State Department of Agriculture.

The need for carrying out research on "Communication patterns of research and extension personnel were suggested by many communication specialists as a future line of research and strongly emphasized the need to analyse agricultural communication from the origin of innovation to their final adoption.

The communication behaviour of extension personnel may be operationally defined as the outcome of different dimensions such as information acquisition (input), information processing and information dissemination (output). They include all the activities performed by the individuals with respect to these communication behavioural dimensions.

This research study would provide an insight for studying the communication behaviour of extension personnel working in government sector. Accordingly, the present study was planned and conducted in North Karnataka with specific objectives to study the communication behaviour of extension personnel working in the Karnataka State Department of Agriculture and to assess the relationship of selected personal, socio-psychological characteristics of extension personnel in respect of their communication behaviour.

The study was conducted during the year 2004-05 in four districts of North Karnataka namely Dharwad, Belgaum, Gadag and Haveri. The four districts were purposively selected because of the diversity in agricultural situation, cropping pattern, agro-climatic conditions socio-economic status and infrastructure facilities. Totally 8 taluks were selected for the study. The extension personnel of 'Karnataka State Department of Agriculture' (KSDA) were considered as respondents under government sector i.e., AAOs and AAs are the grass root level workers engaged in transfer of technology process in KSDA. Among them, number of AAOs and AAs selected for the study were 40 and 140 respectively. Based on review of available literature and keeping in mind the objectives of the study the research design adopted was *ex-post-facto*, since the phenomenon has already occurred and is continuing.

Dependent variable was communication behaviour which refers to the activities performed by the extension workers for the acquisition, processing and dissemination of farm information. The communication behaviour of extension personnel was measured with the help of communication behaviour indices with respect to all the dimensions.

A structured questionnaire consisting of various indices, tests and scales to measure the variables was prepared in consultation with experts and review of literature. Different statistical tests were employed to analyze the data. Besides frequency and percentage and means, various descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

The results in the Table 1. revealed that majority (69%) of the government extension personnel were found in 'medium communication behaviour' category and very less percentage of government extension personnel (14%) were found in 'high communication behaviour' category. The possible reason could be, the communication behaviour of extension personnel is the outcome of different dimensions such as information acquisition (input), information processing and information dissemination (output). Analysis of these dimensions indicated that majority of the respondents belong to 'medium category' with respect to all these dimensions.

A perusal of the table 2 revealed that majority (71%) of the respondents belonged to 'medium information acquisition' category and 89 per cent belonged to 'medium information processing' category and 74 per cent of the respondents belonged to 'medium information dissemination' category.

It is clearly observed from the results that the variables such as education, income and mass media exposure were positively and significantly related with information acquisition dimension. Whereas the variable like age, education, experience, training and job satisfaction were positively and significantly

Table 1. Distribution of extension personnel according to overall communication behaviour

Category	Government	(n=180)
	No.	%
Low(<99.9)	30	17
Medium (99.9 to 198.22)	125	69
High(>198.22)	25	14
Mean	149.07	
SD	49.16	

related with information processing dimension of government extension personnel. The variables such as education, income and experience were positively and significantly related with information dissemination dimension (Table 3).

The significant and positive relationship between communication behaviour and some of the selected characteristics of government extension personnel might be due to following reasons. It was quite logical that extension personnel with high education level, more experience, training and mass media exposure were expected to have more knowledge and understanding which in turn motivated them to perform various acts for seeking farm information better.

Table 2. Distribution of government extension personnel according to dimensions communication behaviour (n=180)

Sl.No.	Dimension	Categories	Number	Per cent
1.	Information acquisition	Low (<72.88)	30	17
		Medium (72.88 to 170.64)	127	71
		High (>170.54)	23	13
		Mean = 121.76, SD = 48.88		
2.	Information processing	Low (<2.42)	10	6
		Medium (8.42 to 23.02)	161	89
		High (>23.02)	9	5
		Mean = 15.72, SD = 7.3		
3.	Information dissemination	Low (<7.38)	28	16
		Medium (7.38 to 15.80)	133	74
		High (>15.8)	19	11
		Mean = 11.59, SD = 4.21		

Table 3. Correlation coefficients of independent variables of government extension personnel with their communication behaviour (n=180)

Sl. No.	Independent Variables	Communication behaviour			
		Information acquisition	Information processing	Information dissemination	Over all communication behaviour
1.	Age	0.098	0.181*	-0.097	0.119
2.	Education	0.192*	-0.215*	0.192*	0.178
3.	Experience	0.132	0.322**	0.175*	0.170*
4.	Income	0.222*	0.076	0.204**	0.202**
5.	Training	0.086	0.261**	0.047	0.142
6.	Family back ground	0.005	-0.008	0.003	-0.002
7.	Mass media exposure	0.189*	-0.028	-0.050	0.185*
8.	Job facility	0.019	0.058	0.044	0.033
9.	Job statisfaction	-0.095	0.062**	0.097	-0.070
10.	Achievement motivation	0.069	0.243	-0.067	0.084

* Significant at 5% level of probability

** Significant at 1% level of probability

The findings were in conformity with the findings of Shinde (1990) and Zuber (2002).

Findings of overall communication behaviour of extension personnel indicated that there is need to increase the communication behaviour level from 'medium' to 'high' by imparting suitable training programmes in the field of "Latest communication technologies, communication skills and computer training". Administrators and policy makers should give top

priority to organize such training programmes. The results pertaining to different dimensions of communication behaviour of extension personnel indicated that majority of the respondents were in 'medium' category with respect to information acquisition, information processing and information dissemination. It is necessary to improve the above communication behaviour dimensions, which will lead to improve the communication skills ultimately results in effective and speedy 'Dissemination of farm technologies' and 'farmer's education'.

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(Received: May, 2007)

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